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A Portrait of School Leadership at  
Senshu University Matsudo Junior and Senior High School

by

Travis Todd Brady

A DISSERTATION

Presented to the Faculty of  
The Graduate College at the University of Nebraska  
In Partial Fulfillment of Requirements  
For the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Major: Educational Studies

Under the Supervision of Professor Marilyn Grady

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A Portrait of School Leadership at  
Senshu University Matsudo Junior and Senior High School

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University of Nebraska, 2014

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As an important symbolic figure and embodiment of the traditions and character of the school, the position of principal in Japan is crucial. Yet societal pressures and an undefined job description are serving to increase pressures of the position. The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine school administrative leadership at a private high school, Senshu University Matsudo Junior and Senior High School. The central research question was: What is the leadership role of the secondary administrator at Senshu University Matsudo Junior and Senior High School?

The sub-questions were: (a) What were the post-war changes implemented in Japanese secondary public and private education? (b) What is the structure of Japanese secondary public and private education? (c) What are the problems facing Japanese education? and (d) How do Senshu University Matsudo Junior and Senior High School and its administrators represent the Japanese secondary private education system?

Interviews were conducted with five individuals at Senshu University Matsudo Junior and Senior High School during June and July, 2012. The head principal and four vice principals were interviewed. Four themes emerged from the analysis of the transcripts. The themes were: Societal Demands on Education; A Slow to Respond System; The Do-All Principal; and A Promotion That's a Demotion.

A society in transition, combined with an education system slow to respond to the pressures these transitions have created, has led to increasing pressure on both the education system and the administration within the system. This study focused on a private secondary school, but called for future research into the role of public school administrators and women in secondary administration.

## Dedication

This work is dedicated to my amazing wife and son. No words can truly reflect how much your love and support carried me through all of the long weekends and late nights writing and editing. The many hours spent in the preparation, implementation, and analysis of this study would be hard on anyone, yet you accepted the time commitment with grace and understanding.

To my wife Kaysha, thank you for being beside me every step of the way. You were my rock through a very stressful time. To my son Landyn, thank you for being my inspiration. In all that I do – the ideologies I stand for and the life lessons I hope to exemplify – I do for you. To not live the example I want to set would be my greatest failure. It is because of my desire to set a positive example for you that I ultimately was able to push through this long process.

## Acknowledgements

There are so many people that helped me through this long process. I would first like to extend special appreciation to my adviser, Dr. Marilyn Grady. Your guidance, encouragement, and support made quick sense of a dizzying maze known as higher education. Your “gentle” nudges along the way also kept me on pace to graduate – thank you!

I would also like to acknowledge my family and friends. This would not have been possible without their support. From as early as I can remember my parents always encouraged me to do my best and push myself academically – thank you mom and dad! Many friends provided support and encouragement through this long process - without all of them I would not have had the ambition or willpower to see this work completed.

Finally, this would not have been possible without the help and support of all of the great staff at Senshu Matsudo! Michiyo - your help and organizational skills made what could have been a confusing experience organized, efficient, interesting, and fun!

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## CHAPTER 1

### Introduction

Following World War II, Japanese education expanded rapidly. High school enrollment rates increased from 42.5% in 1950, to rates that were in the 90% area as of 2004 (Tamura, 2004). Similar to American secondary education, six years of the elementary cycle were followed by three compulsory years of lower secondary education. New comprehensive three-year senior high schools were also established (Kariya, 2011). From the outset, senior high schools were established with differing curricular courses, but over time senior highs started to become specialized in their curricula. Different schools focused on different programs in academic, commercial, technical, and agricultural areas.

In the post-war Japanese education system, all graduates from Japanese high schools were eligible for higher education. This was in stark contrast to the pre-war system, which was composed of substantially different types of schools. Following World War II, lower secondary education that was characterized by egalitarian features paved the way for more universal access to upper secondary education. As Japanese students received the same equal education no matter where they were situated, more students were pushed towards secondary advancement (Shimizu, 1992).

During the 1960s and 1970s, household incomes increased due to the rapid Japanese economic growth. This economic growth increased demand for workers with more skills and education, which in turn placed more value on the high school diploma in the labor market. With the increase in household incomes more families were able to pay

senior high school education tuition, and opportunities for upper secondary education increased steadily. As of 2011, 97.9% of the population 15 and older was enrolled in senior high school – despite the fact that higher secondary education was not compulsory.

With increased overall student enrollment rates in the 1970s, general high school enrollment also rose. As of 2009 the general curricula amounted to 72.3% of the overall Japanese high school enrollment. With less than 20% of students enrolled in vocational studies, general education programs focusing on a wide range of topics became the dominant curricula as secondary education became universalized. Not all was good news for the Japanese education model though, as problems emerged.

There were bold curricular and pedagogical reforms in the 1990s and 2000s, due to a domestic perception that Japanese education was only “instilling knowledge in a one-sided manner” (Kariya, 2011). In 1992 and 2002 revisions to the national curriculum in junior high school were implemented; these followed the ideals of a new accountability concept of academic achievement and ability. This concept was a dramatic departure from the status quo. Called Yutori Kyoiko, or relaxed education, these reforms aimed to provide for more room and growth in overall achievement.

The Yutori reforms were seen as a solution to a vast range of domestic and international challenges. These reforms, that appeared to be working in addressing the ills of the 1980s, worried middle-class urban parents. Parents thought that the reforms would lower their own student’s academic achievement, and in turn future job prospects. Families with the financial means began enrolling their students into private schools. Consequently, private institutions dominate Japan’s upper secondary education.

Due to issues of community-perceived inequity and differentiation in education quality, public and private education in Japan is entering a new critical phase of reform and accountability. With political leaders more willing to be involved in educational reforms, the goal is to raise student performance. The result is a climate where teachers and principals are beginning to focus on self-evaluation for effectiveness of their professional practices (Wong, 2003). The theory is that improved self-evaluation strategies will help teachers better manage competing demands.

In addition to perceived poor education performance, Japanese teachers and administrators saw increases in bullying and disruptions. During the late 1970s and early 1980s, Japanese secondary schools designed and implemented very detailed and restrictive rules, in an effort to address growing classroom disruptions. Teachers and administrators correlated these growing classroom disruptions with declining national test scores. Due to this, Japanese schools were criticized in the 1980s and 1990s as “an emblem of the regulatory style of Japanese education” (Tamura, 2004). Media, education scholars, administrators, teachers, parents, and students were all active participants in controversies arising from school rules (Fackler, 2004; Oshio, Ueno, & Mino, 2010).

These newly implemented school rules were regarded as far-reaching in their “meticulous regulation of the students’ lives” (Tamura, 2004). Teachers and administrators alike agreed on what they perceived as the positive benefits of the school rules. They argued school rules helped to identify troubling behaviors and increase interaction between students and teachers, thus leading to better student/teacher relationships. Critics however contended that these school rules were obsolete, and did not “meet with the cultural trend of post-scarcity Japan” (Tamura, 2004).

In emphasizing and promoting conformity, some teachers and principals sought to resist this shift towards individualism and consumerism. Others, including educators as well, called for the adaptation of rules to fit the newly emerging fashions and lifestyles. To address these growing issues within education, the preference by the prefecture was the principals. The prefecture granted a fair amount of power to the principals - to ensure that they took the leading role in the design and implementation of this process. Local education boards in Japan implemented redesigned evaluation methods and school reforms. The monumental task of enacting these reforms starts with the principal. “Japanese principals act as administrative coordinators, where as teachers play a far more active and influential role in the school curriculum, teaching, and policy making” (Bjork, 2000).

Japanese schools identified key dynamics for effective schools, specifically: a positive school climate, the entire staff working to foster a caring attitude, a safe and orderly environment, an administration that was to support the faculty and staff, and a staff to serve students while also sharing a great deal of involvement in the decision-making. In addition, the effective Japanese school would have “clearly set goals” and “high expectations” (Willis & Bartell, 2009, p. 121). According to Willis and Bartell (1990), the position of the principal in Japan was therefore crucial, as “ultimate responsibility for the school and the actions of the students is in the hands of the principal” (Willis & Bartell, 1990, p. 119).

Because principals in Japan are promoted from within the ranks of their school in a more centralized, “natural” process, there is little in the way of a formal process to ascending to the principalship. For this reason, there is not much literature regarding the



role of the secondary administrator in Japanese education. With such a crucial role to play in the changing field of the Japanese education system, more studies and literature are needed to add to the knowledge base. The purpose of this study was to examine the school administrative leadership at a Japanese private high school, Senshu University Matsudo Junior and Senior High School. Japanese school administrative leadership was examined in an effort to provide a more in-depth look at the role of the secondary Japanese private school administrator.

**Purpose Statement:**

The purpose of this study was to examine school administrative leadership at a private high school, Senshu University Matsudo Junior and Senior High School.

**Research Questions**

The following questions guided this study.

**Central Research Question:**

What is the leadership role of the secondary administrator at Senshu University Matsudo Junior and Senior High School?

**Sub-Questions:**

- (a) What were the post-war changes implemented in Japanese secondary public and private education?,
- (b) What is the structure of Japanese secondary public and private education?,
- (c) What are the problems facing Japanese education?,

(d) How do Senshu University Matsudo Junior and Senior High School and its administrators represent the Japanese secondary private education system?

**Target Audience and Significance of Study:**

The target audience for this study was educational administrators seeking to understand the Japanese secondary private education model.

## CHAPTER 2

### Review of the Literature

This literature review provides a context for a qualitative study of the role of Japanese administrators at Senshu University Matsudo Junior and Senior High School, a private school in the Chiba Prefecture of Japan. The following articles and studies addressed research related to reforms within Japanese education since World War II, the societal pressures on Japanese Education, the overall structure of Japanese education, the roles and duties of Japanese teachers, and the roles and duties of Japanese administrators. The chapter concludes with an explanation of this study's contribution to the literature, and a definition of terms.

#### **Japanese Education Reforms**

Since World War II, Japanese education reforms have served to shape Japanese education into its current form. Research into Japanese education reforms provides insight into the educational structure, as well as the roles of teachers and administrators.

In *Educational Change and the Cultural Milieu: Misadventures in Post-War Japan and Their Implications for American Curriculum Workers*, Armstrong (1976) provided a “sketch of the development of certain features of Japanese education before the end of World War II” (p. 279), and consequently the attempts by The Office of the Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers (SCAP) to reform the school system. As Armstrong (1976) pointed out, SCAP had observed that the Japanese military spirit had resulted in part from the highly selective focus on certain traditional values in the

schools.

Armstrong (1976) demonstrated that SCAP planners immediately undertook the task of changing some very fundamental value patterns of Japanese society. SCAP identified the schools as the most logical social agent to work through, and attempted to use it as a means to ingress in to Japanese society. The hope, according to Armstrong (1976), was that first students, and ultimately all Japanese would gradually accept a worldview “more compatible with that of the Occupation authorities” (p. 279).

Armstrong (1976) concluded that there were some implications of SCAP’s failure to impose a permanent American model in Japan. In a macro sense, Armstrong (1976) stated that the experience in post-war Japan reaffirmed the tenacity of basic cultural values - that while the fundamental commitments appeared to bend under certain conditions, the ‘give’ only represented a temporary straining away in response to external forces. The removal of these external forces with the withdrawal of occupation forces saw these previous commitments “spring back to their original, traditional conditions” (Armstrong, 1976, p. 283). In a micro sense, each school represented a “self-contained subculture complete with taboos, tribal practices, lines of ascendancy, and various other paradigms of right behavior” (Armstrong, 1976, p. 284). Unless the cultural world of the schools became a component of a plan for curriculum change, new programs could have only been maintained through the application of continuous external pressures. With the withdrawal of occupational forces, educational administrators reverted to more traditional behavior patterns.

In *The Development of Japanese Educational Policy, 1945-85*, Beauchamp (1987) outlined the major educational reforms that occurred in Japan following World

War II. In this paper Beauchamp (1987) outlined the historical progression of Japan up to the appointment of the Ad Hoc Reform Council (Rinkyoshin) on the 21<sup>st</sup> of August 1984. As he stated, the appointment of this council was “a logical culmination to a lengthy period of concern in Japan over a set of widely perceived educational problems and the future prospects for Japanese education” (p. 299).

Beauchamp (1987) addressed five time periods in his historical explanation for the Ad Hoc Reform Council of 1984; Japanese education from 1868-1945 from the Meiji to Militaristic Japan, the occupation of Japan from 1945-1952, the post-occupation period from 1952-1960, the expansion of Japan in the 1960s and 1970s, and the Third Major Reform Period from 1978-1987. Beauchamp discussed many policy changes, but focused on a few areas that he identified as important:

...the examination system, centralized control over the educational system, the role of education in fostering economic development, and the knotty problem of how to reform Japanese education to meet the challenges of the twenty-first century while, at the same time, taking care that reforms take a form that is harmonious with Japanese traditions and values. (Beauchamp, 1987, p. 324)

In concluding, Beauchamp noted that if the two previous major reforms (early Meiji and post-World War II) were any guide, Japan would expect sweeping reforms followed by “a period of reflection to modify original reforms and bring them closer to conformity with the realities of Japanese life” (p. 324).

In *Local implementation of Japan's Integrated Studies reform: a preliminary analysis of efforts to decentralize the curriculum*, Bjork (2009) examined the goals and consequences of an educational reform introduced in all of the Japanese schools that

began in 2002 – the Integrated Studies Program (IS). Bjork (2009) drew from fieldwork conducted around Japan over a four-year period from 2003-2006, which examined the impact that the reform had at the school level. The first stage of the fieldwork was a three-month survey of education stakeholders' opinions and experiences related to IS. In this stage, 40 teachers and administrators in eight different prefectures, as well as government bureaucrats working at the Ministry of Education in Tokyo were interviewed. The second stage happened two years later when Bjork spent a year conducting ethnography of three elementary and three junior high schools located in Niigata Prefecture.

The IS, according to Bjork (2009), was designed “to increase teacher autonomy and to augment student interest in learning” (p. 23). The IS was regarded as a vehicle for encouraging the investigation of issues that children face in their daily lives. The Ministry, according to Bjork (2009), deliberately kept its directives to a minimum in order to encourage teachers to assume ownership of the program. Schools determined the number of years devoted to such learning activities, the subjects covered, and the arrangement of instructional content at each grade level, and each institution set its own school-wide and grade-level themes for IS. Teachers acted as coordinators of student learning, and “students designed projects that explored topics related to the themes they found interesting” (p. 24).

Bjork (2009) stated, “the study of IS provided valuable insights into the effect of the program at the local level, teachers' views about education reform, and the Ministry of Education's ability to facilitate change in the schools” (p. 23). Bjork concluded that “the IS forced education stakeholders to re-examine their core beliefs about the purpose

of schooling, the attitudes and skills that students need to succeed in contemporary society, and the responsibilities of teachers” (p. 23). Bjork (2009) also stated that it served as a valuable case study for testing theories about decentralization and their potential to enhance the management and delivery of education (p. 40).

In *Educational Reform in Japan in the 1990s: ‘Individuality’ and other uncertainties*, Cave (2001) analyzed the reform measures and debate of the late 1980s and early 1990s surrounding the argument that the Japanese school system had become too rigid, uniform, and exam-centered. Under the slogan of stress of individuality (*kosei jushi*) the reforms were aimed at encouraging creativity by introducing more freedom of choice into the education system (Cave, 2001, p. 173). Although Cave (2001) stated that there was evidence that these reforms of the 1990s were indirectly influenced by progressive pedagogical ideas from the West, he argued that the Japanese reform measures had little resemblance to neoliberal/neoconservative reforms overseas. Cave (2001) stated that “through observation and interviews at school level, one could understand how education and educational reform were implemented on the ground, and compare official and media discourses on education with understandings at the grassroots” (p. 174).

According to Cave (2001), there were four main methods for this qualitative study. The first method analyzed the main documents of the 1990s from the Ministry of Education, interest groups like the Japanese Teachers’ Union and business federation, and prominent commentators on educators within Japan. The second method looked at the policy measures that were actually undertaken. The third method drew from observations, interviews and conversations with teachers and parents. And the fourth

method drew from previous research to illuminate the social, historical, and political contexts of contemporary reforms (Cave, 2001, p. 174). The interviews and conversations with teachers and parents came during ethnographic fieldwork in two Japanese primary schools from 1994-1996, and one junior high school from 1996-1998. In 1998, interviews about the education reforms were conducted with the vice-presidents of Japan's two largest teaching unions and an official in the Ministry of Education. Additional visits to Japan included 2 weeks at a primary school in 1999, and 10 1-day visits to different junior high and high schools in 2000.

Cave (2001) concluded that educational reform in Japan during the 1990s displayed its own rationale, and could only be understood in the context of the country's particular political situation and educational history. Cave (2001) stated that although tentative reforms of a neoliberal type might have foreshadowed a "shift to a system oriented to consumer demand, the main reforms enacted to date favour the progressive rather than the neoliberal agenda" (p. 187). He concluded by stating that despite the stereotype of Japanese imitators, Japanese education was likely to continue to attract the attention of foreign observers, due to its different and distinctive course (Cave, 2001, p. 187).

In the article *Should the U.S. Mimic Japanese Education? Let's Look Before We Leap*, Cogan (1984) stated that "although the U.S. could and should adopt some elements of the Japanese education system, other practices were better left to the Japanese" (p. 463). In this article Cogan (1984) attempted to briefly describe the distinguishing characteristics of the Japanese education system, and its components that U.S. educators should or should not try to emulate. Cogan was careful to point out that he was in no way



a Japanologist specializing in education, nor was his research a comprehensive treatment of Japanese education – he was just an interested observer of education in Japan, who had lived there for one year.

Cogan (1984) briefly discussed some of the significant reforms following World War II like the School Education Law of 1947 that established the 6-3-3 school system, and then talked about the successes of the Japanese school system of the 1970s and 1980s – he specifically discussed the social support of Japanese education, the demands Japanese education places in its youth, Japan as a learning society, teacher obligations in and out of the classroom, and the general philosophy of Japanese education to foster the well-roundedness of the individual. After a discussion of the strengths of the Japanese education system, Cogan (1984) discussed some weaknesses of Japanese education; all of the weaknesses of the education system, according to Cogan (1984), centered on the system of national examinations. The specific weaknesses that Cogan (1984) discussed were the system of national examinations itself, school violence, the rigid focus of schools on preparing students for the exams, a system that benefited the youth of the wealthy, little chance to fall behind or for students to catch up, adult social status was directly linked to school achievement, and students lost the desire to learn for the sake of learning in this system.

According to Cogan (1984) there were things that the U.S. could learn from Japan, despite their differences. First, the U.S. should focus on the basics including art, music, foreign language, and physical education. Second, The U.S. should demand higher levels of performance from students. And third, the U.S. must accord the teaching profession more respect than it receives. Cogan (1984) concluded that,

nations which seek to improve their educational systems can learn from one another... that education is, to a large degree, culture-bound. As U.S. educators seek to adopt, adapt, or mimic the practices of other nations, we should first study the cultural elements that are embedded in those foreign educational systems. What works well for one nation doesn't always work well for another. (Cogan, 1984, p. 468)

In *The Egalitarian Transformation of Postwar Japanese Education*, Cummings (1982) analyzed those features of the Japanese education system that enabled it to produce egalitarian outcomes, as well as the relation between egalitarian educational outcomes and egalitarian changes in the structure of adult society. Data from this study derived from two strands of education research – “methodological empiricism”, and “transformation through education.” The distinctive features that Cummings (1982) identified were: the Japanese education system underwent revolutionary change from 1945-1947, the increased interest in education, the equality of Japanese schools, The demanding nature of Japanese schools, the Japanese school was the educational unit, the security of the Japanese teacher, the equitability of Japanese teaching, the belief in the whole-person education, and that the official curriculum was rich in egalitarian and participatory themes.

Cummings (1982) concluded that educational systems, given the appropriate conditions, could produce egalitarian outcomes in young people, and that the young people could exert pressure for egalitarian change as they join adult institutions.

Cummings (1982) stated that postwar Japan provided an interesting example of the power of education for social transformation – the challenge was to determine the extent to

which the postwar Japanese experience was generalizable to other contexts rather than unique to that particular historical context. The main ingredients in the Japanese case, according to Cummings (1982), were a “major shift in national direction and the emergence of a determined and idealistic body of teachers who became committed to egalitarianism” (p. 35).

In the article *The Liberalization of Japanese Education*, by Duke (1986), Duke discussed the reform movements of the 1970s to liberalize Japanese education. Duke (1986) stated that while it appeared that the changes to liberalize the education had engulfed the classroom, a more cautious analysis revealed, “by the time the reform movement had waned, the typical Japanese classroom was little changed” (p. 37).

After a discussion of the historical progression of reforms that brought Japanese education reformers to their liberal mindset, Duke (1986) concluded that the liberalization of Japanese education would continue to follow the “painstakingly planned and slowly and cautiously implemented” lines recommended by the Ministry of Education (p. 38). Duke (1986) stated that the traditional cultural traits such as loyalty, and harmony and group consciousness contributed to the emergence of Japan as a supereconomic power to compete against the progressive United States - the traditional society of Japan, well-known for its continuity and uniformity, was challenging the great progressive society of America. The fact that the reform committee of the 1980s was calling for respect for individuality, the nurturing of independent thinking, creativity, etc., virtually a repeat of the aims of the American Occupation reforms nearly forty years ago, was testimony that the Americans failed to achieve their goal to liberalize Japanese education as intended (Duke, 1986).

In *Catching Up in Education in the Economic Catch-Up of Japan with the United States, 1890-1990*, Godo and Hayami (2002) compared “the progress of education between Japan and the United States based on the consistent time series of the average number of schooling years per person in the working-age (15-64)... we prepared for the 1890-1990 period” (p. 962). The study by Godo and Hayami (2002) presented an overview on the evolution of the educational system in Japan as background knowledge for a quantitative analysis, an outline of the process of growth in the stock of human capital from formal education in Japan based on their time series data of average schooling and identified its major characteristics through comparisons with the experience of the United States, and discussed the role of education in the race of economic growth between newly emerging economies and advanced economies by comparing broad trends in the level of education with those of real GDP per capita and capital-labor ratio between Japan and the United States.

The conclusion of Godo and Hayami (2002) was that the growth of average schooling in Japan was much faster than in the United States throughout the period of analysis from 1890 to 1990. Consequently, the major gap between the average educational levels for Japan in comparison with the United States during the early Meiji period was closed by 1990. A major change was also observed in the pattern of economic growth through growth in education before, during, and after the World War II. According to Godo and Hayami (2002), their hypothesis was based on Japan’s experience during 100 years of modern economic growth as compared with the United States, and was compatible with the consensus view that “investment in education was a

critical element in order for developing economies to attain the kind of economic development that advanced economies enjoy” (p. 975).

In the article, *Towards Reform in Japanese Education: a critique of privatization and proposal for the re-creation of public education*, Horio (1986) analyzed the state of debates regarding the “highly-controlled, competitive and extremely expensive education” (p. 31) of the 1970s and early 1980s in Japan. Horio (1986) stated that within the debates on educational reform were two main positions: that of the government and the ruling Liberal Democratic Party, and that of the Japan Teachers Union (JTU) – which had connections with progressive political parties. At the center of the debate, according to Horio (1986), was a government that was heavily influenced by those entities benefiting from the system at that time - the financial and industrial circles, at odds with the JTU over educational reforms that criticized such things as standardization, the lack of flexibility of the education system and educational administration, and called for “more flexibility, wider accessibility, and greater respect for the subtlety of human development” (p. 35).

In the book, *Educational Thought and Ideology in Modern Japan: State Authority and Intellectual Freedom*, Horio (1988) presented a highly critical look at education in Japan. Horio (1998) rejected the idea of state control of education and the idea of education as manpower training, which he saw as underlying the Ministry of Education’s educational policy in the post-war period. Horio’s book was a collection of 14 historical and philosophical essays covering a wide range of topics in Japan between 1967 and 1986. The main point, according to Horio (1986), was that the development of Japanese education since the Meiji era had been characterized by repressive state control

(excluding the occupation period shortly after World War II). Horio (1986) argued that the subordination of education to economic demands was advanced to promote the capitalist form of economic life, and contended that the Ministry of Education violated the 1947 Fundamental Law of Education in its attempts to control education.

In the paper, *School evaluation at Japanese schools: policy intentions and practical appropriation*, Katsuno and Takei (2008) described the development of school evaluations policies in the context of recent Japanese education reform. According to Katsuno and Takei (2008), their aim was to propose and examine two questions: How people should understand the mode of quality assurance in the Japanese education system that had emerged, and how the school evaluation policies would work in schools. For this study, Katsuno and Takei (2008) conducted a series of observations and interviews with the teaching staff and students at six Saitama Prefectural schools in 2004 and 2006. Their goal was to investigate how the system of school evaluation was put into operation, and how they perceived the process. In total, twenty-two staff were interviewed, which consisted of head teachers, staff responsible for school evaluation, and teacher advisers to the student council. Forty students were also interviewed in an informal atmosphere (Katsuno and Takei, 2008).

Katsuno and Takei (2008) concluded that many staff at that particular school advocated the value of the development of students as independent and tolerant individuals. They were aware of the managerial nature of school evaluation promoted by the policies, and made an intentional choice as to how the process was conducted. It was noted that “the head teacher effectively buffered the pressures for more managerial practices of school self-evaluation, which put more emphasis on the results of

examinations” (p. 179). They concluded that it was undeniable that they could see a disjuncture between school evaluation policies and practices where a more liberating story for students and possibly teachers could open up. Although within neo-liberal thinking student voice was individualized, supportive teachers intended to make use of the school self-evaluation forum as a public arena and encouraged student representatives to reach the whole student body, reminding them of collective responsibility.

In *Teacher evaluation in Japanese schools: an examination from a micro-political or relational viewpoint*, Katsuno (2010) focused on teacher evaluation methods and how they were engendering and endangering relationships with teachers. To this end, Katsuno (2010) employed what he called the work through model of performativity. According to Katsuno (2010), the work through model paid more attention to micro-politics and micro-power relations, and allowed the researcher to draw a more subtle picture of not only the manner in which teacher evaluation was being conducted in schools, but also how performativity was being applied in schools. To illustrate the necessity and usefulness of the work through model, an analysis of the teacher evaluation procedures was presented.

For this research project, Katsuno (2010) conducted a nation-wide survey and in-depth interviews with twelve teachers and four head teachers in four focus schools – three senior high schools and one special school. Questionnaires were sent to 3,787 head teachers of public, primary, secondary, and special schools across Japan in February 2008. The questionnaires were drawn from schools randomly selected by prefecture and school type, from the Japanese School Registry. From there, head teachers recruited 1,368 teachers to also complete a questionnaire. Of those 1,368 participants, 146 teachers agreed to cooperate further. In addition to the questionnaires, in-depth interviews were

conducted to provide a better picture of what was happening in the process of teacher evaluation.

Katsuno (2010) concluded that all of the teachers interviewed, except for one, felt alienated by the increasing emphasis on measurable aspects of teaching and learning. They were torn between what the target setting and testing regime required, and what they thought they should do with their students. As the pressure of testing and assessment increased, “performativity came to encroach upon the policies and practices of teaching and learning - affecting relations, values, and even the identities of teachers” (Katsuno, 2010, pp. 304-305). Katsuno (2010) stated that the proliferation of numerical objectives in which teacher evaluation was playing its part was likely to result in the deterioration of the quality and standards of education in Japan (p. 305).

In *Hopes and challenges for progressive educators in Japan: Assessment of the 'progressive turn' in the 2002 educational reform*, Motani (2007) demonstrated that the origin of the Japanese educational reforms could be traced to reports prepared by various neo-liberal/conservative business leaders and politicians, and that “their privatization and decentralization principles happened to coincide with the increasing interest of progressive citizens’ groups and educators” (p. 309). The paper outlined initiatives of the 2002 educational reform, and then analyzed socio-political contexts - based on published documents and interview data obtained in 2002.

The data for this study came from 30 interviews, either as individuals or as part of focus groups, and derived from a previous study for the Japanese case study of the Global Citizenship Education Research Project. The project was funded by the Ford Institute to examine the origin, development, and impact of the emerging global citizenship



education movement in 10 countries. The analysis in Motani's (2007) paper was extended and rewritten from the draft report of the project. The face-to-face interviews occurred in 2002, with follow-up interviews conducted through email/phone communication from September 2002 to January 2003. The individual interviewees included educators, municipal government advocates, and educational representatives of NGOs.

According to Motani (2007), the study revealed that a new progressive educational trend emerged – driven by two different factors: the increased interest in civil participation, and neo-liberal/neo-conservative educational reformist ideas coming from neo-liberal/neo-conservative business leaders and politicians. This match of interests between progressives and neo-liberal/neo-conservatives was challenged by critics concerned with the decline of academic achievements among the younger generation. While these critics were successful in stirring a national controversy over declining academic achievement, they had little impact on actual educational reform (Motani, 2007). According to Motani (2007), this indicated that progressive educators in Japan were given an opportunity to expand their role in influencing the future direction of Japanese education. Motani warned that challenges to progressive educators remained formidable, and more radical structural challenges were necessary to become a strong, steady force for educational change (p. 310).

In *Education of whom, for whom, by whom? Revising the Fundamental Law of Education in Japan*, Okada (2002) examined the conflicts that animated educational reform debate “in an attempt to understand the move towards the revision of the Fundamental Law of Education (FLE)” (p. 425). Through the use of historical documents

pertaining to Japanese educational reforms, Okada (2002) argued that the revisions of the FLE threatened the democratic ideals of post-war Japanese schooling and resulted in greater educational inequities along the lines of social stratification. According to Okada (2002),

the Fundamental Law of Education was enacted in 1947 based on the democratic principle that sovereignty rests with the people, on the universal declaration of fundamental human rights and on the renunciation of war. As such, it effectively replaced the pre-war Imperial Rescript. (p. 438)

The FLE thus served to confirm the central theme of the post-war education system in Japan: democratic control. Regarding the issue of revision of the FLE, the dispute over educational and equal autonomy illustrated the struggle between conservatives and progressives in post-war Japanese education. Through a series of deliberations, groups attempted to conclude an era of demands by conservatives to remove certain parts of occupation reforms, that were considered too foreign to suit the traditionalist image of what Japanese education should be (Okada, 2002. Okada (2002) concluded that much would be lost if the government prematurely committed itself to revamping the long-serving legislation of the FLE.

In *Secondary Education Reform and the Concept of Equality Opportunity in Japan*.\, Okada (1999) attempted to shed light on the evolution and historical transformation of the concept of equality of opportunity, as applied to educational policies in Japan from the end of World War II to the 1990s. Okada's (1999) paper analyzed the Central Council for Education's (CCE) reform proposals of the 1990s, and placed them in the context of developing the concept of equality of educational

opportunity in the years since 1945. To trace the historical transformation of the concept of equality of education opportunity, Okada (1999) selected two explanatory models – egalitarianism and meritocracy. Okada (1999) concluded that there was interplay between egalitarianism and meritocracy that eventually caused a transformation in the concept of equality and opportunity in Japan. Okada (1999) stated that it was important to note that the concept of equality of opportunity shifted from the egalitarian concept to the meritocratic concept in Japan over time. According to Okada (1999), while the future remained uncertain, the findings of this study suggested that the dialectical stress between meritocracy and egalitarianism would continue to plague policy makers in Japan (p. 186).

It might be concluded that the CCE needs to reconsider and explore in more depth the various possible meanings of terms such as ‘equality of opportunity’, ‘equality’, ‘ability’, ‘social class’, ‘meritocracy’, and ‘egalitarianism’ and how these have been treated and debated at different periods in other industrial societies. (Okada, 1999, p. 186)

In the article, *The development of secondary education in Japan after World War II*, Okuda and Hishimura (1983) discussed how the attempt to organize upper secondary education along American lines with comprehensive Japanese high schools, had given way to a structure more in keeping with Japanese needs. Their paper was originally prepared for dissemination under the National Institute for Educational Policy Research’s (NIER) Information Services Program among United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (Unesco) Member States in Asia and the Pacific. Professor Okuda, from Yokomaha National University, wrote part I, and Mr. Hishimura, the Deputy Director-General of the Elementary and Secondary Education Bureau of the Ministry of

Education, Science and Culture, wrote part II.

In Part I, *The Development of Lower Secondary Education*, Okuda and Hishimura (1983) discussed the results of the post-war reform on the lower secondary school system in Japan. Using primary documents for their data, Okuda and Hishimura (1983) discussed the establishment of the lower secondary school system, curriculum development in lower secondary school, and the objectives of lower and upper secondary schools. In this discussion, the 1947 Fundamental Law of Education and subsequent revisions of 1951, 1958, 1969, 1977 were used to highlight policy changes. Similarly, in part II, *The Development of Upper Secondary Education*, Okuda and Hishimura (1983) discussed the results of the post-war reform on the upper secondary school system in Japan. Using primary documents for their data, Okuda and Hishimura (1983) discussed the establishment of the upper secondary school system, the dissemination of upper secondary education, compulsory attendance, and upper secondary education in the future.

In the paper, *Is Japanese Education Becoming Less Egalitarian? Notes on High School Stratification and Reform*, Rohlen (1977) discussed several aspects of the question of educational equality - as it existed in postwar Japanese cities, and as it appeared to be changing under the influence of certain reforms in the high school system. The data for this study came from spending one to two months in each of five high schools in Kobe: Nada High School - the nation's top private school, a prefectural academic high school, a city academic high school, a city vocational school (commercial) high school, and a city, night vocational (industrial) high school (Rohlen, 1977). Each of the high schools was selected to represent various points on the spectrum. Rohlen (1977) attended classes,

interviewed teachers, witnessed school life in general, and collected statistical material from a questionnaire, the individual schools, and the Ministry of Education.

Rohlen (1977) discussed many topics in this paper, including the university entrance picture, getting into high school in Kobe, and private efforts to supplement education. The previous topics laid the groundwork for a discussion of the movement for high school reform. Rohlen (1977) concluded that as Japanese society became more like a meritocracy, due to persistent growth of large organizations that stressed educational criteria in hiring and promotion, the place of the educational system in the overall determination of status naturally grew. But as education became more central to more of the populace, it became more susceptible to the influence of intensified differences in each family's capacity to compete in that arena. "The Japanese meritocracy appeared to be evolving in the direction of a fixed status framework, characterized by competition" (Rohlen, 1977, p. 70).

In *Educational decentralization in three Asian societies: Japan, Korea and Hong Kong*, Sui-cho Ho (2006) identified and compared the nature of decentralization that emerged in three Asian societies after a decade of their involvement in the decentralization movement. The data used for this paper came from The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development's (OECD) 2000-2001 International Program for Student Assessment (PISA) study, which was designed to assess the extent to which 15-year-old students approaching the end of their compulsory education, had developed the knowledge and skills required for successful participation in the community (Sui-cho Ho, 2006). As Sui-Cho Ho (2006) stated, PISA provided a "unique opportunity to assess the distribution of decision-making responsibilities between the different stakeholders in

different education systems” (p. 592). According to Sui-cho Ho (2006), a total of 140 schools from Hong Kong, 135 schools from Japan, and 146 schools from Korea participated in the PISA 2000 cycle.

The conclusion of the study for Japan was that the level of school autonomy in Japan was similar to the PISA average, while teacher participation was lower – though, as Sui-cho Ho (2006) pointed out, teacher participation was more important than school autonomy for student achievement. Japan showed a higher level of decentralization in the areas of budgeting, student affairs, and curriculum when compared to the PISA average. Lastly, the results of the study showed that principals in Japan were the primary decision makers, empowered to make decisions independent of the influence of central authorities outside of the school (Sui-cho Ho, 2006).

In the article, *A Nation at Risk Crosses the Pacific: Transnational Borrowing of the U.S. Crisis Discourse in the Debate on Education Reform in Japan*, Takayama (2007) focused on a crisis in Japanese education that stemmed from an earlier National Commission on Excellence in Education report in 1983 titled, *A Nation at Risk*. According to Takayama (2007), conservative critics of Yutori (low pressure or relaxed education) reform borrowed crisis discourse that was popularized in the United States, in which they compared the state of Japanese education under the 2002 Yutori reform to the crisis experienced by American education at the same time. Conservative critics argued that solutions could be derived from America’s school reform since 1983 (Takayama, 2007). Drawing upon the culturalist approach to educational borrowing, and combining this with social constructionist theories that defined crisis as an ideological construct, Takayama (2007) attempted to contribute to the theoretical discussion on educational

borrowing by presenting a unique cultural, economic, and political context of Japanese education.

According to Takayama (2007), he demonstrated that the external references to U.S. reform and its successes were used “as a source of additional authority to legitimize the view that Japanese education was in the throes of crisis” (p. 439). Takayama (2007) also discussed the politics of the cross-national exchange of educational discourses between American and Japanese neoconservative critics of education. Takayama (2007) discussed how neoconservatives referenced the U.S. recovery, and “the U.S. false conception of Japanese education to legitimize their own neoconservative return to the idealized past” (p. 439). “The symbolic appeal associated with ‘U.S. education reform’ was, therefore, used not only to scandalize Japanese education under Yutori reforms but also to revitalize the mythical distant past” (Takayama, 2007, p. 439). Takayama (2007) concluded that the significance of the West spoke to the continued legacy of Western cultural imperialism, which made examples from U.S. education reform a powerful ideological register in the politics of education reform in non-Western nations.

In *Is Japanese education the “exception”?: examining the situated articulation of ne-liberalism through the analysis of policy keywords*, Takayama (2008) built upon previous work that critiqued the Orientalist legacy in Anglo-American discussions of Japanese education. According to Takayama (2008), one of the manifestations of this legacy was the prevailing view among Anglo-American observers that Japanese education was the exception to the global restructuring movement of the late 1990s and early 2000s (p. 125). Takayama (2008) stated that this article “problematized that view by exposing a similar but differently articulated structural change in Japanese education

during the past three decades” (p. 125).

In order to trace the shifting meanings of *kosei* (individuality) and *yutori* (relaxed or low pressure) in the Ministry of Education’s official policy documents during the past three decades, Takayama (2008) drew on discourse analysis and cultural studies for this article. By tracing the histories of “articulation and rearticulation” (p. 137) of these policy words, Takayama (2008) demonstrated how the keywords,

...which had been associated with progressive political struggles against the Ministry’s central control of public education, were mobilized to reconstitute people’s common sense about education and thus to naturalize the radical systemic change towards the neo-liberal, post-welfare settlement. (p. 137)

According to Takayama (2008), this study showed how the global discourse of neo-liberalism “had become rearticulated and re-contextualized in a manner that reflected the particular history of political contestations in Japanese education” (p. 137). Takayama (2008) called for a more critical, reflexive engagement with the field’s preoccupation with national differences.

In *Emerging Issues in Educational Reform in Japan*, Wong (2003) used a demand-supply continuum to highlight emerging reforms in the Japanese education system. The data for Wong’s (2003) article came from two weeks of fieldwork during 2003 in major urban districts and their prefectures in Nagoya, Osaka, and Tokyo. Extensive interviews were conducted with school officials in the Mie Prefecture Board of Education, Tsu Senior High School in Mie Prefecture, the Takahama City Board of Education, Tsubasa Elementary School in Takahama City, the Osaka Prefecture Board of Education, Kawanishi Junior High School in Osaka, the Tokyo Prefecture Board of



Education, and the Shinagawa Ward Board of Education.

In addressing such issues as higher education restructuring, integrated governance and mediating demand and supply at the elementary and secondary levels, and ongoing self-evaluation by school site personnel as a supply-side reform strategy, Wong (2003) concluded that the Japanese education system entered a critical phase of reform. As Wong (2003) indicated, the strands of reform that were discussed were illustrative of the differential approaches at the national, prefectural, and local levels. When taken as a whole, the balance between demand and supply considerations shaped the design and implementation of reform efforts in Japanese public schools (Wong, 2003). Wong (2003) concluded that, “given the role of these reforms in shaping the quality of education in Japan, it was important for the research community to gather data on their instructional consequences” (p. 248).

In summary, this section provided an overview of the literature related to the education reforms that shaped Japanese education in the post-war era. As discussed, reforms such as the 1947 Fundamental Law of Education, the 1984 Ad Hoc Reform Council, and the 1992 and 2002 Yutori implementations were products of, and catalysts for societal change. Researchers have studied the reforms, as well as the societal ramifications of such reforms on the Japanese society and educational policy.

### **Societal Pressures**

Research related to the societal pressures on Japanese education provides insights on the rationale for reforms within Japanese education, and consequently the changing roles of teachers and administrators.

In 2010, Akiba, Shimizu, & Zhuang reported that, “since the 1980’s, school bullying – Ijime – has been a major concern of education policy in Japan” (p. 369). The 2006 research of Akiba et al. focused on three major aspects of student-teacher relationships in Japanese schools: bonding, student guidance, and instructional support. In a survey of 2,999 Japanese students, Akiba et al. posed two general research questions. First, what relationships do Ijime victims and bullies have with school teachers? Second, how is the student-teacher relationship associated with victimization and bullying? Using a multi-staged sampling method to select students, seven out of fourteen schools were selected. Three schools were located in urban areas, two from suburban areas, and two from rural areas.

The teacher-administered survey asked about three common types of Ijime that students might have experienced in the prior 12 months: verbal abuse, physical violence, and peer exclusion. Their findings indicated that 31.7% of students experienced Ijime victimization, and 30.6% of students bullied another student at least once. Breaking down the specific type of Ijime, 29.9% of students reported being verbally abused, and 28.5% of students reported that they had verbally abused another student; 15.7% reported being victims of physical violence - hitting, slapping, or pushing, and 12.4% reported that they had hit, slapped, or pushed another student; 18.8% of students reported being excluded from their peer group, and 18.1% reported that they had excluded a friend from a peer group (Akiba et al., 2010).

Akiba et al. (2010) concluded that the findings from their study had important implications for policy and practice in Ijime prevention and intervention. They explained that their data “demonstrated that both victims and bullies were more likely than other

students to devalue schooling, and in turn experience boredom and frustration at school” (p. 387). Akiba et al. (2010) concluded by suggesting that dealing with Ijime cases would take a significant amount of time and energy from Japanese homeroom teachers. They stated that there needed to be a “system to divide responsibilities among homeroom teachers, administrators, and psychological professionals, while keeping homeroom teachers well informed of the process and progress once the case leaves the hands of homeroom teachers” (Akiba et al., 2010, p. 388).

In a study titled, *The Relationship of Temperament and Adjustment in Japanese Schools*, Ballentine and Altman (2001) hypothesized that “children whose temperaments match the features, demands, and values of their environment will demonstrate a better fit or adjustment to that environment” (p. 299). The study examined the temperament ideal held by Japanese teachers, as well as the relationship between judged temperament and the adjustment of children in classrooms. The research was undertaken in five schools located in the Hiroshima and Okayama Prefectures - three schools were in urban areas, and the other two were from rural areas, and consisted of 18 teachers – 8 from private schools and 10 from public schools.

Using a questionnaire format, the researchers assessed a range of temperament for both ideal and actual temperament. They concluded from their data that temperament ideals were consistent with previous sociological research in the area, as well as with “Li Ko (good child) ideal held by Japanese mothers” (Ballentine & Altman, 2001, p. 306). As they stated,

...good adjustment was significantly related to high task orientation, persistence, and flexibility, as well as to an approaching (as apposed to withdrawing) style and

positive mood. The child who fit the cultural ideal of a ‘good child’ was perceived as better adjusted to the programs, and to the adults and peers in Japanese schools. (Ballentine & Altman, 2001, p. 299)

In the article titled *From High School to Work in Japan: Lessons for the United States?*, Brinton (1998) asked whether the Japanese system held the key to “establishing a successful transition from high school to work and to ameliorating associated problems in the labor market for less educated youth in the United States”, or whether the Japanese system was a “mirage for U.S. educational analysts and policy makers” (p. 443). He identified his central purpose was to stimulate thinking on this question, rather than attempt a definitive answer. Drawing from fieldwork and data collection conducted in Japan in the fall of 1995, winter of 1996, and the fall of 1997, Brinton (1998) stated, “it is my intent to convey some of the complexities that should be considered in arguments for transposing the highly structured Japanese system to the American context” (p. 443).

Backed by his research, Brinton (1998) stated that, “Japan’s labor force appears to be better able to absorb people at the lower end of the educational spectrum...” and “few Japanese enter the workplace without a high school education” (p. 443) when compared to the United States. The conclusion of Brinton (1998) was that there were many possible reasons for this – namely their vocational programs, the successful industrial growth of Japan in the 1990s, and the hierarchical Japanese system’s highly centralized reliance on test scores to structure the competition for good jobs. “The contest has been predetermined by the fact that job offers go to schools rather than directly to students without any intermediary” (p. 449).

In the book *Japanese Education in an Era of Globalization: Culture, Politics, and Equity* by Decoker and Bjork (2013), they look at dynamics of education in Japan – in an attempt to explain the perception of the highly efficient Japanese education model.

Decoker and Bjork (2013) attempted to dispel myths centered on Japanese education success. As an example of this, they pointed out:

...Japan's international standing was not bolstered by the high scores of Japan's best students: The top 10% of U.S. and Japanese students had similar achievement levels. The key to Japan's overall high achievement was the bottom 50%, where the greatest difference between the two countries existed. (Decoker & Bjork, 2013, p. 12)

The focus of Decoker and Bjork's book centered on one of the primary tensions in discussion about Japanese education:

the extent to which observed phenomena are attributed to the influence of Japanese culture, or to structural features of Japanese society, e.g. educational and social policy, resource availability, features of institutional organization, local and national politics, and so on. (Decoker & Bjork, 2013, p. 22)

Decoker and Bjork (2013) concluded that ultimately it was concepts of person, self, and self-other relationships that undergrid some contemporary issues of education, from bullying to globalization. In accounts of Japanese education, they pointed out that there was a shifting status of Japanese education in the global arena – that, whereas Japanese educational success was once a model that challenged America to rethink its own practices, Japan was facing its own internal challenges as it struggled to deal with growing disparities, declines in international standings, and an uncertain political

economy (Decoker & Bjork, 2013).

In the book, *The Japanese School: Lessons for Industrial America*, by Duke (1986), he attempted to assess whether the United States is a nation at risk by analyzing the source of the Japanese economic model. Duke taught in U.S. public schools for five years, and in Japan 25 years as a professor of comparative and international education at the International Christian University in Tokyo. His main argument was that America tried to erroneously assess Japanese competitive effectiveness by looking at Japanese factories or the Ministry of Trade and Industry. Rather, the source of challenge lay in Japanese traditions and values, and the role of the school system in transmitting those values.

Duke (1986) contended that the Japanese school functions as a critical instrument within the structure of Japanese society – carefully nurturing and perpetuating the basic qualities of the Japanese worker. According to Duke (1986), three main features of Japanese education stood out: an intensely competitive examination system centered on basic skill instruction, a motivational attitude of persistent all-out effort, and a loyalty to the group and style of group leadership. By analyzing Japan's historical condition as vulnerable and embattled, as well as the persistent influence of the way of the samurai life (bushido) on the Japanese culture, Duke (1986) connected the interdependence of Japanese school life with the larger cultural experience. He did this throughout his book with classroom examples of uniformity and conformity. Duke (1986) concluded that Japanese society has functioned effectively because of the voluntary commitment of individuals to the welfare of the group.

In a 2004 article in *The Wall Street Journal – Eastern Edition* titled, *As Test*

*Scores Fall, Japanese Schools Get Harsh Lesson*, Fackler (2004) pointed out the societal tension surrounding the Yutori implementations of 1992 and 2002. Fackler (2004) wrote about the example of Hideo Kageyama, head of the Tsuchido Elementary School in western Japan. While the national trend of Japan was moving toward a relaxed education model, Mr. Kageyama maintained the structure of the rigid cram model of education. According to Fackler (2004), Mr. Kageyama became a national celebrity in the backlash against the education reforms as Japan began to see test scores fall. Fackler's article was aided by anecdotal interviews of teachers, parents, and students.

In a discussion paper from 2006, titled *Leisure Time in Japan: How Much and for Whom?*, Fuess looked at a 2001 Japanese survey of 77,000 households selected from 6,440 different districts across Japan. In the surveys, individuals kept diaries – recording time allotments for different activities. Some of the leisure pursuits that Fackler identified were - media activities like watching television, listening to radio, reading newspapers and magazines, non-regular school work studying for research or self-improvement, pursuing hobbies, playing sports, volunteering and other social causes, and socializing.

The conclusions Fuess pointed to were an increase in media-related leisure activities at the expense of other more outgoing leisure areas – except non-regular school/work studying. The national trend he pointed to was one where the Japanese as a society were moving away from social activities toward more isolating activities like television and media.

Gordon, Fujita, Kariya, and Le Trende (2010) discussed the societal challenges to Japanese education in *Challenges to Japanese Education: Economics, Reform, and Human Rights*. This book consisted of a collection of essays on different topics. Two

specific essays dealt with Japanese high schools as mechanisms for selection and stratification in society. One essay, by Akira Sakai, pointed to inadequate government financial support, difficult family situations, and gender expectations as reasons for Japanese students' declining interest in education. Another essay, written by Mamoru Tsukada, dealt with educational stratification in Aichi. Specifically, he highlighted the emerging role of Boards of Education in weakening the power of the teachers' unions by establishing new high schools whose personnel and cultures are more easily shaped by boards. The conclusion of Gordon et al. (2010) was that the boards were able to do this as a result of an expansion in the educational aspirations of students and their parents.

According to Gordon, et al. (2010), Tsukada's essay suggested the need for new, in-depth studies of Japanese education. They pointed out that the considerable changes of declining union power, and post-high school availability options had affected teachers and students during the past two decades.

*In The Family's Influence on Achievement in Japan and the United States*, Holloway, Fuller, Hess, Azuma, Kashiwaga, and Gormam (1990) studied the role of parents and teachers in preparing children for school. In a collaborative study between Japanese and American investigators, links were sought between maternal variables and children's school achievement. This longitudinal study began its first phase in 1973 with children averaging 3.8 years of age, and continued over a two-year period of time. Data for this study came from 58 Japanese families representing all socio-economic ranges, and included a maternal interview, three laboratory interaction tasks, and various intelligence and achievement tests.

A follow-up phase was conducted for Japanese children when they were in fifth



grade. In this second phase, 44 of the original 58 families agreed to participate. The follow-up included a maternal interview concerning the children's school achievement, and the Japanese children were given an IQ test (Holloway, et al., 1990). The results of the study indicated that for the Japanese, only the social-class variable was significant in linking the maternal role and student's school achievement. Although they found that the mother's endorsement of the school and micro level parenting behaviors contributed to the child's later achievement (Holloway, et al., 1990), in Japan specifically,

children's performance depended heavily on the social class of their family, not the importance granted by parents to the institution of school... Increased use of private schools and after-school tutoring by wealthier families... contribute to perceived-and actual-differences in the achievement potential of various socioeconomic groups. (Holloway, et al., 1990, p. 205)

According to Inui (1993), in *The Comparative Structure of School and the Labour Market*, the problem in Japanese education was the excess of competition. Although the competition helped the high standards of Japanese education, it also brought difficulties for Japanese youth. In comparing the Japanese and British labor markets, Inui made three conclusions. Within each country, competition in school and in the labor market was closely linked. In Japan, both were unified and similar general criteria worked in the labor market and in school. Structural linkages between the labor market and school were intensified by each country's type of articulation between labor-market and school – in Japan the closed and unified system. Finally, the nature of competition determined the degree of meritocratic competition in school – In Japan competition among students related to social mobility and was concentrated in the unified meritocratic competition.

Due to this, “meritocratic competition in school was oppressive, and was exacerbated by changes in socioeconomic condition” (pp. 311).

In *Japanese Education in the 21st Century* (2005), Ishikida discussed many social issues that emerged in the late 21<sup>st</sup> century that impacted Japanese education. Among the most influential, according to Ishikida, were the stratification of schools and stresses derived from the examination structure. Ishikida (2005) pointed out that the three different types of Japanese high schools (academic, vocational, and technical) resulted in a hierarchy, as schools were ranked based on the number of students that had moved on to attain a University degree. He pointed out that competition for schools was intense, due to this ranking system. According to a 1995 survey of Japanese parents, more than two-thirds of parents of Japanese children from fourth to ninth grade described the entrance examination as stressful for their children and themselves, and referred to the exam preparatory time as “examination hell” (Ishikida, 2005, p. 83).

According to Ishikida (2005), the competitive nature resulted in the popularity of private schools. Private schools in Japan had more leeway to focus on University entrance standards and “social issues like ‘School Refusal Syndrome’ where students refused to go to school due to psychological, emotional, physical, social, or environmental factors” (Ishikida, 2005, p. 122). Another result, according to Ishikida (2005), was the changing role of Japanese teachers and administrators. Competition derived from the ranking system served to place increasing pressure on teachers to prepare their students for university entrance exams, and on administrators to compete for students to attend their school (Ishikida, 2005).

*In Japanese solutions to the equity and efficiency dilemma? Secondary schools,*

*inequity and the arrival of “universal” higher education*, Kariya (2011) posed two questions: How did Japan’s stratified education system reflect social inequities in accessing higher education? And, How had privatization of secondary and higher education affected social inequality in education? In an attempt to answer these questions, Kariya (2011) analyzed nationally sampled data of Japanese youth between the ages of twenty and forty. The dataset was from the Japanese Life Course Panel Survey (JLPS), and was a longitudinal panel survey collected by Tokyo University first from January to April 2007, and then from follow-up surveys in 2008 and 2009. The survey randomly sampled Japanese males and females on a range of questions related to socio background and life course. The surveys were divided into two parts: a youth survey sample of 3,367 respondents from the ages of 20 to 35, and a middle-age survey sample of 1,433 respondents from the ages of 36-40 (Kariya, 2011).

The results, according to Kariya (2011), were both “pessimistic and ironic” (p. 261). Social inequality appeared to remain an issue in the structure of education in Japan – despite the fact that “universal” access through privatization and expansion of the lower tiers of the higher education system had been realized. Kariya (2011) stated that simply increasing opportunities for higher education did not automatically mitigate social issues in higher education. He went on to explain further that over time, access to selective universities had become more severely affected by attendance at top rank private secondary schools, “access to which is, in turn, influenced more strongly by socio-economic and cultural aspects of family background for the younger cohort” (Kariya, 2011, pp. 261-262).

Another result, according to Kariya (2011) was that the changes in the hierarchy

of secondary schools helped worsen the social inequity in accessing selective universities. The privatization of secondary education - brought about by parental distrust in public education reforms and promoted by school-choice policies - intensified influences of students' family background on chances to enter the elite private schools (Kariya, 2011, p. 263). Kariya stated that if privatization went too far, the privatization of secondary education would eventually lead to "more rigid lines of social inequity, perhaps enough to eventually make connections between school choice and equality a political issue" (Kariya, 2011, p. 264).

As was pointed out by Kariya (2011), the Japanese solution was "a realisation of equality in enrollments through a privatized expansion of the lower tiers, yet maintaining a degree of efficiency by leaving the 'top' of the system untouched" (p. 264). He concluded by stating,

such a solution means that substantive equity has remained largely unaddressed: financial resources of families persist as a barrier to access to both the top and bottom 'ends' of the system even though higher education reached a 'universal' stage. (p. 264)

Oshio, Sano, Ueno, and Mino (2010) addressed the topic of evaluations by parents of the education reforms of the 1990s and 2000s. The data source that the study used was a national Internet survey conducted by the Cabinet Office (CAO) of the Japanese Government, from October 3<sup>rd</sup> through 10<sup>th</sup>, 2006. The sample consisted of 2,000 adults with students ranging from pre-school to high school.

In examining how parents evaluated the education system and assessed possible reforms, Oshio et al. (2010) found that parents with higher educational backgrounds,

occupational status, household income, and higher education attainment expectations from their children tended to be less satisfied with the system in place. The parents seemed to favor the school choice and voucher program, and were more willing to pay for additional education provided by public schools.

In *Education for Modernization: Meritocratic Myths in China, Mexico, the United States, and Japan*, Ranson (1988) examined the validity of an earlier statement made by Clark Kerr in *Observations on the Relations between Education and Work in the People's Republic of China* (1978). The specific statement was that “it is not possible to be both for modernization and against meritocracy” (Ranson, 1988, p. 747). The goal, according to Ranson (1988), was “to examine Kerr’s truth that the goal of economic modernization makes meritocracy necessary” (p. 748).

After a presentation of literature on the topic, Ranson (1998) concluded that, “contrary to widespread belief... there is a technological imperative against, rather than for, meritocratic education” (p. 759). He identified characteristics within Japanese education that highlighted this conclusion, specifically: a) that while Japanese primary schools prepared all students at a uniformly high level of mastery, parents of higher socioeconomic status actively sought out extra opportunities to advance their child, b) at the middle level, entrance examinations further stratified Japanese students, and c) once the student reaches the ranks of higher education, they were products of a social system centered on subverting the meritocratic system.

Saito and Imai (2004), who wrote *In search of the public and the private: Philosophy of education in post-war Japan*, presented a paper that focused on Japanese philosophy of education in the post-war period. They began with an historical account

that concentrated on developments in ideas, and their intentions with policy. They highlighted ways in which new developments in the subject would serve to “restore and enhance the relationship between the private and public realms” (p. 583). In discussing differing philosophical ideologies, Saito and Imai demonstrated that,

nearly 60 years after the democratization of Japan, philosophers of education and pedagogues now face an urgent need to rebuild the foundations of the concepts of the public and the private and to conceive of these in new and richer terms, in such way as to have an impact upon people’s ways of thinking and upon educational practice. (Saito & Imai, 2004, p. 591)

Saito and Imai (2004) concluded their paper by identifying some of the trends in the Japanese philosophy of education, as seen through four groups of philosophers:

- a) Those who based their work on the French Annales School, as well as on the writings of Philippe Aries.
- b) Those concerned with analysis of the power structures hidden in educational activities - drawing substantially on the theories of Bourdieu and Foucault, as well as on Anglo-American critical sociology of education.
- c) Those characterized by their interest in postmodern thought, including French poststructuralism, American deconstructionism and the philosophy of Habermas.
- d) And those scholars engaged in Deweyan philosophy of education.

They stated that in light of the need for the reconceptualization and reconstruction of democracy in Japan, the role of the Deweyan philosophers was especially significant.

In *Inside Japanese classrooms: The heart of education*, by Nancy Sato (2004), Sato discussed key dynamics of Japanese culture as it pertained to education. Sato (2004)

stated that the Japanese identified “community” as more than a certain place or identifiable set of people, interests, and characteristics – they said that it was also the ongoing set of relations that were constantly evolving from moment to moment through the day. The constant relations, according to Sato (2004), were key to learning.

Sato identified two tenets of Japanese educational philosophy that emerged over the course of her research: the centrality of heart (*kokoro*), and the necessity of togetherness. Heart, according to Sato (2004), was the center of one’s being – the combination of our mental, physical, emotional, aesthetic, and spiritual capacities. Togetherness also referred to the self – the whole person. These principles were what Japanese teachers in her study referred to when they sought to promote a deeper, more comprehensive learning in their students.

In the article titled *Japanese Education and Its Implications for U.S. Education*, Shimihara (1985) identified and discussed some distinctive merits within the Japanese education system. Shimihara (1985) began by pointing out that the system did have some limitations; the societal pressures brought on by entrance examinations had resulted in cram-style education, alienation, and violence in Japanese Schools. After pointing out the negatives of the system, Shimihara (1985) proceeded to discuss the merits by considering both the sociological factors and educational factors.

Distinctive sociological factors identified by Shimihara (1985) were the pattern of vertical social mobility in Japan, a profound socioeconomic and cultural homogeneity, the college entrance examination system, and the saturation of sources of educational information in Japanese society - as represented in the large amount of bookstores specializing in test-prep materials. Distinctive educational factors identified by Shimihara

(1985) were the intensity and focus of the school system (as represented in the large number of juku or tutoring schools in Japan), the emphasis of Japanese schools on effort rather than innate ability, motivation of student learning was considered part of the mission of Japanese schools, and the Japanese school functioned as a “moral community that emphasizes the development of such attributes as cooperation, orderliness, precision, participation, diligence, and group-centeredness” (Shimihara, 1985, p. 420).

In *The politics of international league tables: PISA in Japan’s achievement crisis debate* by Takayama (2008), Takayama analyzed “the role of local actors, specifically, nation newspapers and the Ministry of Education, in mediating the potentially homogenizing curricular policy pressure of globalization exerted through the PISA league tables” (p. 387). In this paper, Takayama (2008) discussed the controversy that surrounded the release of the 2000 and 2003 PISA findings. As Takayama (2008) stated, politicians within the Ministry of Education used these findings to attack some of the yutori reforms that were implemented in 2002 – namely that of the 5-day school week in Japan. According to Takayama (2008), newspapers in Japan contributed by selectively printing reports in an effort to sensationalize the findings.

In examining the different media reports on the PISA outcomes, Takayama (2008) stated that,

the paper illuminated how the moral uproar over Japanese students’ academic performance, instigated by Yutori reform critics and conservative politicians and intellectuals, biased the media and led to their adoption of the dominant crisis discourse that framed any decline in performance indicators as confirmation of an academic crisis. (Takayama, 2008, p. 401)



Takayama pointed out that the public concern generated by the media coverage placed MEXT in a position to address the crisis – even though the data only indicated moderate drops in performance. Takayama’s conclusion was that the Ministry exploited the PISA 2003 data as a source of external legitimization for a set of highly contentious policies that “not only enabled its reorientation of the unpopular yutori reform, but facilitated its institutional shift to the market-based output management mode of educational administration” (Takayama, 2008, p. 401).

In the study, *Illusion of Homogeneity in Claims: Discourse on School Rules in Japan*, Tamura (2004) conducted fieldwork in the summers of 1998 and 1999 in Japan. The goal of the study was “to identify benefits of school rules in Japan, as perceived by teachers and school officials, critical claims against rules, and points of contention on the issue of school rules” (p. 54). As Tamura (2004) stated, the findings in the paper relied on two sources of information: open-ended interviews of sixty-four individuals, and primary and secondary publications. The interviewees consisted of “five members of the boards of education in Kyoto and Nara Prefectures, 28 principals in five school districts, 18 teachers from six different districts and 13 former students who spent their six years of secondary school experiences between 1980 and 1997” (Tamura, 2004, p. 54).

In his conclusion, Tamura (2004) stated four major educational merits of school rules: Teachers and school administrators emphasized that school rules were useful in maintaining order, facilitating interaction between students and teachers, socializing students, and preserving equality in educational settings. In regards to school rules, he stated that it was important to have sensitivity to the diverse ways school rules were considered educationally advantageous. And finally, in the discussion of controversy

derived from school rules, Tamura (2004) provided a case study of a school where school rules had been criticized on multiple grounds, from human rights issues to expressions of individuality. Within the discourse of school rules, teachers and staff were interviewed who represented both sides of the argument for and against strict school rules in Japan.

In *School Dress Codes in Post-Scarcity Japan*, Tamura (2007) addressed the issue of dress codes in Japan. The goal was to provide a better understanding of practices of youth socialization in Japanese schools, and of cultural consequences of post-scarcity on schools. Although this article focused primarily on Japanese secondary schools, the fieldwork was derived from a larger study on Japanese education titled *Illusion of Homogeneity in Claims: Discourse on School Rules in Japan*, published in 2004. For the study, 64 open-ended interviews were conducted. The interviewees consisted of “five members of the boards of education in Kyoto and Nara Prefectures, 28 principals in five school districts, 18 teachers from six different districts and 13 former students who spent their six years of secondary school experiences between 1980 and 1997” (p. 469).

In this article, Tamura (2007) discussed nationally pervasive rule changes that allowed for more individual choices, as well as views of the positive nature of school uniforms. Some of the identified positive were: dress codes were a means to socialize students for their future careers and their life as a citizen, dress codes served as training for their lives after school, dress codes were not for control but for facilitating communication and for building positive relationships with students, and dress codes were also considered beneficial in hiding diverse socioeconomic statuses of students.

In his conclusion, Tamura (2007) identified five of the dress code changes that occurred in the 1980s and the 1990s; from prescriptive dress codes to prohibitive, from a

prescriptive dress code to an unspecified guideline, from prohibitive dress codes to unspecified guidelines, the elimination of dress codes entirely, and finally an update of old-fashioned uniforms (p. 473). He concluded by stating that his findings showed

...one possible scenario that other nations on the way to post-scarcity can use as a reference so that educational transitions can be as smooth as possible. Educators need to recognize the reflexive nature of modernity and be prepared to adjust school practices in accordance with the shifting roles of education at different historical junctures. (Tamura, 2007, p. 485)

In summary, this section provided a discussion of the societal pressures on education in post-war Japan. The reviewed literature identified societal pressures, stemming from many different sources. Some of the pressures discussed were: the social pressures of an exam-based society that resulted in problems of isolation and bullying, a hierarchical tiered educational structure based on exam achievement, political fallout from declining international testing benchmarks, and a post-scarcity society that was dealing with issues of modernity - as seen in the discourse on school rules and dress codes.

### **Education Structure**

The education structure in Japan determines policy course, changes to the national curriculum, and frequency of new implementations. Therefore, an understanding of the education structure in Japan is important to better reforms to the system, and any changing roles to teachers and administrators.

In the essay, *The Educational Role of Japanese School Clubs* by Cave (2004), the role of bukatsudo (extracurricular school clubs) was discussed. As Cave (2004) stated, “these ‘communities of practice’ employ a model of learning akin to apprenticeship, stressing imitation and repetition while socializing students into values and behavior demanded in adult society” (Cave, 2004, p. 383). Cave pointed out that clubs promoted social order; therefore, “understanding bukatsudo illuminated the nature of order, selfhood, human development, and learning in Japan” (Cave, 2004, p. 383).

Cave (2004) indicated that formal research began in 1992, when two public junior high schools and four public high schools in the Kansai region were visited. Each junior high school was visited a total of three times, and each high school was visited between three to six times. At the junior high schools, 5 teachers and 13 students were interviewed, and at the high schools, 18 teachers and 33 students were interviewed. A questionnaire survey was also administered to 31 junior high and 47 high school supervisors. From there, documents such as brochures, training manuals, club histories, and yearbooks were examined (Cave, 2004).

Cave (2004) concluded that within Japanese secondary schools, at least two patterns of learning existed: the classroom model, and the club model which more traditionally resembles the apprenticeship-style patterns of learning. According to Cave (2004), clubs have flourished because of their flexible nature and multifaceted appeal, they appealed to teachers and parents with traditional notions of student discipline and development, they were a means of school management and control, and were institutions with potential for creation and self-realization along with coercion and domination.

Cheng and Wong (1996) provided an analysis of the idea of school effectiveness

in East Asia. In their paper they discussed different economic factors and development in China and Japan. As they stated,

the economic development in East Asian communities has aroused much interest since the 1970s... Such an interest has led to studies on all aspects of social lives in East Asian societies... Ironically, education, which is fundamentally a cultural enterprise, is a latecomer in this endeavour. (Cheng & Wong, 1996, p. 32)

Their thought was that papers on education policy would attract new attention to East Asian education at the levels of administration and management. The paper discussed the findings of their research, related it to writings about East Asian culture, and concluded with a discussion on the implications for school improvement.

The study by Cheng and Wong (1996) was conducted to analyze the processes of education by looking at various relevant aspects of quality of education and effectiveness of schools – specifically students, teachers, principals, parents, local leaders’ classrooms, schools, and the localities. The study took place in 1989-1990, and was designed for educational planners “in order to understand the processes of basic education and the environments in which basic education takes place” (Cheng & Wong, 1996, p. 33).

According to Cheng and Wong (1996), the findings suggested four points: there was a consistent support of education from the community, there was a demonstrated high degree of professionalism among teachers whose prime concern is student learning, there was a built-in tradition of quality assurance, and there were coherent high expectations of students.

In the article, *Japanese Education*, Ellington (2005) provided an overview of Japanese educational achievements, Japanese K-12 education, Japanese higher education,

contemporary educational issues, and significant U.S.-Japan comparative education topics. The data for this article was provided from pertinent articles, publications, and studies on the topic of Japanese education.

The central focus of the article by Ellington (2005) was a discussion of the Japanese K-12 education structure. Ellington (2005) pointed out that even though the Japanese adopted the American 6-3-3 education model after World War II, their system was more centralized under the control of the Ministry of Education. According to Ellington (2005), the Ministry of Education controlled national education decisions, and with it decisions regarding staff policies and textbook and curriculum implementation. Ellington (2005) stated that although national education curricular decisions came exclusively from the top-down, financing was handled differently. “Municipalities and private sources fund kindergartens, but national, prefectural, and local governments pay almost equal shares of educational costs for students in grades one through nine” (p. 1). This, according to Ellington (2005), allowed a certain amount of local control in education decisions.

According to Ellington (2005), education in Japan was compulsory through ninth grade, with almost 90% of students attending public schools through their ninth grade year. The other 10% attended private school through ninth grade, and 29% of students overall attended a private school (Ellington, 2005). Ellington (2005) stated that there were few comprehensive high schools in Japan.

Between 75 and 80 percent of all Japanese students enroll in university preparation tracks... university-bound students attend separate academic high school while students who definitely do not plan on higher education attend

separate commercial or industrial high schools. (Ellington, 2005, p. 1)

Some of the contemporary issues discussed in Ellington's (2005) article that affected changes in Japanese schools and increased controversy about education were: declining birth rates, an increase in double-income families, an increase in divorce rates, a slow economy, and reforms that brought about the Integrated Studies curriculum. According to Ellington (2005), the public and teachers blamed the Integrated Studies curriculum for "dumbing down the curriculum" (p. 2).

In *Educational administration in Japan*, Kida (1986) analyzed issues central to Japanese educational administration. The article centered around two main topics: the existing state and characteristics of educational administration, and the development of educational administration and its prospects. Within the discussion of the existing state and characteristics, Kida (1986) detailed the education responsibilities shared between National, Prefectural, and Municipal Government, and the standardization of administrative competencies. Within the discussion of the development of educational administration and its prospects, Kida (1986) detailed the issues of universalization of school education, ideals and realities of post-war education reform, and social development and today's educational issues.

In *Nationalism, democracy, and tradition: The Japanese secondary school*, Kobayashi (1967) presented an analysis of the post-war Japanese secondary school just fifteen years after occupation by American forces. In his analysis, Kobayashi (1967) pointed out problems concerning Japanese education. As Kobayashi (1967) stated, some of the problems were the control of education policy (centralized versus decentralized), the outcome of a trend towards urbanization in Japan, and how to "allocate priorities to

general education, vocational training, and college preparation while adhering to the social ideal of equality of educational opportunity” (p. 181).

The article by Kobayashi (1967) focused on the issue of priority allocation, specifically as it pertained to trends in the emergence of schools that specialized in different areas. According to Kobayashi (1967), “the post-occupation trend was from a generalized, comprehensive school curriculum to separate programs with different objectives” (p. 3). An important outcome to Kobayashi (1967) was an increase of apprehension in parents regarding the type of school their children would enter upon completion of junior high school.

As more students sought to specialize their curriculum, competition increased for academic-track schools, which resulted in the formation of entrance exams. It was these entrance exams, according to Kobayashi (1967), that contributed to social issues like bullying and isolation. Kobayashi (1967) concluded that the attempt to demilitarize and to democratize the society “formed the backdrop for some of the problems in secondary education” (p. 185).

In *Community-building activities in Japanese schools: Alternative paradigms of the democratic school* Le Tendre (1999) analyzed the Japanese educational concepts of life-style guidance (seikatsu shido) and group living (shudan seikatsu). According to Le Tendre (1999), these terms covered a “wide range of activities and programs... aimed at developing students’ social skills and integrating them into the social life of the school” (p. 283). Le Tendre (1999) stated that by studying the implementation of lifestyle guidance or group living in Japanese schools, “social values related to participation in society that are encoded in many of the school-based activities could be analyzed” (p.



283).

According to Le Tendre (1999), the primary evidence for this article came from an ethnographic study of guidance and counseling procedures used in rural and urban middle schools in Japan. Subsequent analysis of secondary data was conducted at Stanford University, and “a second body of qualitative data... as a primary field researcher in Japan” (Le Tendre, 1999, p. 285) was subsequently analyzed and incorporated into the article. The qualitative data from this study came from 80 semi structured interviews of about 50 minutes each, and included teachers, students, and parents – in addition to observations of classrooms and student activities. The schools chosen were selected from three cities in Japan, and included schools with high, medium, and low overall student academic achievement (Le Tendre, 1999).

Le Tendre (1999) concluded that the activities of lifestyle guidance and group living provided models for egalitarian participation in classroom processes. He stated that the models produced substantially different forms of democratic education that could only be implemented dependent on the cultural values of a given community. According to Le Tendre (1999):

...although specific Japanese activities may make little sense for many ethnic and linguistic groups within the United States, their enactment clearly shows the very different ways that schools could be organized... Reforms that focus on education for democracy would do well to examine and adopt community-based strategies for group decision-making and conflict resolution. (Le Tendre, 1999, p. 309)

In *Reconsidering the Basics – A Study in Japanese Education*, Sato (1992) presented an ethnographic study in Japanese public schools. As stated by Sato (1992), the

primary goal of the research was “to record daily life as the students actually experienced it and to secure as natural a look at the setting as possible” (pp. 1-2). The classroom research was conducted from April 1987 through April 1989, and data collection was mainly through intensive, daily observations at two Tokyo high schools. According to Sato (1992), one high school was from the upper class and the other high school was from the lower class in Japanese society. As Sato (1992) described it, “to secure as natural a look at the setting as possible, I attended school with the same students all day every day, Monday through Saturday, 8:00am until the students went home every day” (p. 2).

In this study, Sato (1992) posed the question, “What are some aspects of Japanese elementary schooling that support a broader conception of the basics and achievement of high standards in a variety of academic and nonacademic activities for most students?” (p. 2). Sato found that while Japanese students attended more days of schooling than their American counterparts, those extra days were not academic, but rather for ceremonies, special events, and extracurricular activities. Sato (1992) also pointed to a focus on the heart (*kokoro*) and human relations as a way in which to foster the whole person. One final aspect Sato found to support a broader concept of basic achievement was in the way in which the Japanese viewed and modeled educational goals. Education in the Japanese classroom was seen as a long-term process, both inside and outside of school. The focus was placed on the process, on group membership, and on relations.

Sato (1992) cautioned that this study could not give sufficient details as to the complexities and diversity of the process through Japan. She also stated that a further element missing from the study was a discussion of the problems and negative elements

within the system. Her conclusion was that the overall findings based on the observed Japanese schools were positive.

In *Shido: Education and selection in a Japanese middle school*, Shimizu (1992) aimed to examine the role of the Japanese middle school through the term “shido” (to guide into the right path by teaching). Shimizu (1992) pointed out that very little research had been conducted regarding Japanese middle schools, so consequently Shimizu (1992) wanted to fill the void of literature pertaining to Japanese middle schools. According to Shimizu (1992), this paper was based on fieldwork he carried out in a state middle school, Nanchu, from 1987 to 1989. Shimizu stated that Nanchu was one of 22 state middle schools in Amagasaki, with about 1,100 pupils enrolled from lower socioeconomic background.

Shimizu (1992) explained that the scope of shido in Japanese schools was wide and could not be described by terms such as instruction or guidance. Whatever was seen by individual teachers or groups of teachers to have educational value for children was put into practice and labeled as shido (Shimizu, 1992, p. 116). Shimizu (1992) stated that shido could be divided into three aspects, namely *gukashushido*, *seitoshido*, and *shinroshido*; *gukashushido* and *seitoshido* related to the academic and the behavioral spheres of the school respectively, and *shinroshido* was an operation relating to the children’s future lives on the basis of these two shidos.

Shimizu (1992) concluded his study by considering how the shido observed in Nanchu affected the socialization of pupils (p. 126). Shimizu (1992) summarized the characteristics of shido at Nanchu as the kind that “devoted more attention and energy to those who are ‘down below’... to push up the whole body of pupils” (p. 128). Deriving

from discussions with other teachers throughout Japan, Shimizu (1992) stated that this type of shido was not peculiar to Nanchu, but rather “universally observed in all Japanese primary and secondary schools” (p. 128). The two outcomes of this type of shido were high educational achievement for all, but the marginalization of high performing students who did not present behavior problems.

In *Myth and Reality in Japanese Educational Selection System*, Takeuchi (1991) examined Japan’s selection system through a case study of educational selection. Takeuchi (1991) specifically attempted to challenge the belief that Japanese education selection was like a tournament. In this study Takeuchi (1991) examined the destinations of graduates from five academic senior high schools, all of which belonged to the same school district in the Aikawa Prefecture. He stated that the school district used was a typical one in that senior high schools were ranked hierarchically. The school district consisted of 14 senior high schools comprised of both academic and vocational high schools.

Takeuchi (1991) described educational selection as the mode of competition for entry to selective universities in Japan. According to Takeuchi (1991), “the main reason for the competitive educational selection procedures in Japan were the high number of students that graduated from high school and enrolled in universities” (p. 104). As Takeuchi (1991) pointed out, this competitive system resulted in a stratified senior high school system that horizontally tracked schools as a whole – unlike the perpendicular tracking system of the United States that exists within individual schools. According to Takeuchi (1991), due to the presence of this system of tracking, both Japanese and non-Japanese inferred that the mode of selection in Japan was one in which ultimate decisions

were predetermined at an earlier stage. He stated that the eventual rank order of upward social mobility extended downward at least to senior high school level, and sometimes to primary level.

Takeuchi (1991) concluded that there was no reason to use the tournament metaphor for the Japanese educational selection system. He pointed out that at the core of the Japanese success myth was the conviction that Japan was low in natural resources, and consequently competition between people in Japan was seen as a zero-sum game. The Japanese desire to rise in the world was often motivated not by the prospect of great success – as the tournament metaphor would imply, but rather by fear of great failure. In this regard then, the Japanese selection system was better explained using the myth of scarcity.

In 2001, Tsuneyoshi presented a book that looked at the characteristics of educational practice in Japan and the United States, and their social and historical backgrounds. Titled *Japanese Model of Schooling: Comparisons with the U.S.*, Tsuneyoshi (2001) emphasized the centrality of socialization as an organizational theme for education. This book illustrated the idea that a society's education reflected its culture through its socialization process. In an attempt to get to the basis of Japanese education, Tsuneyoshi (2001) focused on the process of socialization at the elementary level. To do this, Tsuneyoshi (2001) paid special attention to non-academic extracurricular activities that occupy a considerable amount of time in Japan's primary schools.

In her analysis of different levels of education, Tsuneyoshi (2001) revealed how Japanese teachers at the micro level appealed to the children's emotions to elicit voluntary cooperation. At the mid level she showed the institutionalized small group

activities that provided opportunities to experience cooperation, as well as manually outlining the “correct” way to do daily routines. At the macro level, Tsuneyoshi (1991) demonstrated the congruence between the socializing processes in schools, and the patterns of practice in the larger Japanese society. Finally, she traced the historical origins of extracurricular activities and a cooperative classroom community as products of national policy-making. Tsuneyoshi (1991) pointed out that the interaction of these different levels of conduct resulted in a distinctive pattern of Japanese education both communal and efficient.

In summary, this section was a presentation of literature about the education structure in Japan. As a top-down, tiered system, the Ministry of Education oversees all issues of national curriculum, policy changes, and the frequency of new implementations. From there, Prefectures determine local issues of financing and resource allocation. At the school level administrators and teachers are charged with the daily coordination and operation of the school. Within the discussion of the structure of Japanese education is the educational philosophy of the whole-child, a sense of teaching to the whole of the child in terms of academics, discipline, morality, and traditional Japanese values within society. This was best demonstrated in the examples of lifestyle guidance and group living in an effort to promote egalitarian ideals.

### **Japanese Teachers**

This section provides a review of literature concerning Japanese teachers. Research into the duties of Japanese teachers provides a basis for understanding the

Japanese administrator - as administrators are recruited from, and still considered to be among the ranks of Japanese teachers.

In the essay, *The Educational Role of Japanese School Clubs* by Cave (2004), the role of bukatsudo (extracurricular school clubs) was discussed. As Cave (2004) stated, “these ‘communities of practice’ employ a model of learning akin to apprenticeship, stressing imitation and repetition while socializing students into values and behavior demanded in adult society” (Cave, 2004, p. 383). Cave pointed out that clubs promoted social order. Therefore, “understanding bukatsudo illuminated the nature of order, selfhood, human development, and learning in Japan” (Cave, 2004, p. 383).

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with potential for creation and self-realization along with coercion and domination.

Collinson and Ono (2001) outlined the professional development of teachers in the United States and Japan. In an overview of professional development they examined similarities and differences in the two countries. According to Collinson and Ono (2001), the United States focused more attention on standards and policies, whereas Japan focused more on practice.

Collinson and Ono (2001) stated that the Japanese assumed that the beginning teachers' habits and practices had a lifelong impact on development. The Japanese invest in the selection and retention of teachers through an extensive professional development program during teachers' initial year in the classroom. Beginning teachers in Japan "participate in a compulsory 1-year induction programme consisting of 60 days of in-school, mentor-based training, as well as 30 days of out-of-school training, usually at a prefectural Education Centre" (Collinson & Ono, 2001, p. 227). Within the school, Japanese beginning teachers had assigned mentors that were pulled from the ranks of the more experienced teachers. These mentors had release-time to work with, and observe beginning teachers on a regular, weekly basis.

Collinson and Ono (2001) concluded that professional development in the United States and Japan were considerably different – especially in the areas of little or no initial assistance versus well-supported training for beginning teachers, low versus high retention rates, and isolation versus collective cultures in schools. The two countries share similarities - both countries wanted greater teacher competency and quality, seamless career-long professional development for teachers, and a better balance of theory and practice in professional development. According to Collinson and Ono (2001),



both countries were engaged in reform efforts that recognized professional development as a vehicle for change, and were “exploring reform efforts such as teacher and program evaluations, merit pay, professional development schools, and advanced degrees and certification” (p. 241).

In *Teacher Education and Professional Development in Japan*, Frieh discussed Japanese in-service teacher training programs as a role model for successful professional development. The focus was to look at how the Japanese conducted their teacher training program, and what could be learned from their example. Frieh pointed out that in their first year of teaching, Japanese teachers are provided more opportunities for in-service training, as well as better in-school support structures. Topics of the paper included: pre-service training, entrance into the teaching profession, internships for beginning teachers, and in-service teacher education through government sponsored programs, graduate study, school-based teacher development, and national teaching networks.

Frieh concluded that the Japanese collegial model of in-service training was one that could serve to be an example for western societies. She stated that the Japanese model was more efficient and effective than the top-down approaches of the west, and also “very influential on the improvement of many professional activities of Japanese teachers” (p. 17). At the end of the paper Frieh posed the question: “Can the Japanese system that is based on a peer-driven approach become a model for professional development in other countries?” (p. 17). The answer was that “one has to recognize the value of teacher collaboration and networking, as these are important strategies to promote teacher development and reflection” (p. 17).

In the study, *The Comparison of Gender Distribution among School Principals*

*and Teachers in Taiwan, Japan, and South Korea*, Huang, Yang, & Wu (2012) compared the gender distribution among school teachers in Taiwan, Japan, and South Korea. The main purpose of the study was to explore the unique gender divide among school principals and teachers. The research methods employed derived from document analysis, and descriptive data analysis – with the statistical data collected from the Ministry of Education in each respective country, and supplementary data from the OECD dataset.

The study indicated that in Japan, the ratio of female elementary teachers showed a decrease from 65% in 2002 to 62.7% in 2007, and the number of secondary female teachers increased from 24.6% in 2003 to 41.4% in 2007 (Huang et al., 2012). As a whole, the ratio of female teachers in elementary and secondary schools in Japan was 54% lower than that of those in other East Asian countries like Taiwan and South Korea. With only 17.9% of females in elementary principal roles and 5% in secondary principal roles, Huang et al. (2012) concluded that the phenomenon of unique gender distribution was present in Japan, as well as the other two countries in the study. They stated, “the difference between number of female teachers and number of female principals was significant” (Huang et al., 2012, p. 9).

The study by Huang et al. (2012) provided a discussion of systemic, cultural, and traditional reasons for this disparity. They ultimately concluded that it was still necessary to investigate the reason why it was less likely for female teachers to become principals - taking into account the factors affecting female teachers’ promotion to supervisor. Their suggestion was to investigate whether such obstacles could be eliminated (Huang et al., 2012).

In *From school to work in Japan*, Rhodes and Nakamura (1996) discussed the

issue of student counseling, guidance, and job programs in Japan. Although there had been little interest in student counseling and guidance programs, “a thorough investigation of the subject leaves no room for doubt that Japanese students receive far more social and academic counseling than Americans and that this leads to results that most Americans have never enjoyed” (p. 1). The reason for this dynamic, according to Rhodes and Nakamura (1996), was that Japanese students received their guidance and counseling from their homeroom teachers. Because of this, Japanese students choose their careers early in life based on the guidance they received from their homeroom teachers – teachers they saw every day, as opposed to the infrequent visits to counselors within the American school system.

Rhodes and Nakamura (1996) identified the systemic factors that served to afford Japanese students an advantage in guidance and counseling. The authors identified the legal foundation for career guidance, career guidance committees in schools, how students use the resources of the school to get jobs, and the role of the homeroom teachers. Rhodes and Nakamura (1996) stated “Japanese homeroom teachers usually serve as both academic and social advisers to around forty students under their charge for a three-year period” (p. 2). They also pointed out that Japanese teachers are responsible for the social and academic success or failure of their students, required to keep a record of their students’ grades in all subjects, and arrange in-school study sessions for students in danger of failing. “In Japan, failure is never an acceptable alternative, and homeroom teachers must see to it that their students do not fail – either in academic or in other areas” (Rhodes & Nakamura, 1996, p. 2).

Rhodes and Nakamura (1996) stated that the Japanese system is not without

problems. They concluded that while students were not generally forced into making important decisions against their will in this system, they were discouraged from taking risks or stretching their abilities. Teachers felt pressured into getting their students into any job or school “so long as they do not become ‘ronin’... which is used to refer to young people who have been unsuccessful in either finding a job or getting into school” (Rhodes & Nakamura, 1996, p.5). They concluded that, “whatever problems may exist... Japanese high school graduates continue to benefit from the system” (p. 5).

In the article, *Context Matters: Teaching in Japan and in the United States*, Sato and McLaughlin (1992) examined the context surrounding teachers’ professional lives. The goal, according to Sato and McLaughlin (1992), was “to create a more solid foundation for mutual understanding and for comparative study between the U.S. and Japan” (p. 1). The article was based on a collaborative study between researchers at the University of Tokyo and at Stanford University.

According to Sato and McLaughlin (1992), the data for the study came from the responses of elementary, junior high, and high school teachers to two surveys. One of the surveys was developed by Japanese researchers, and the other by American researchers. Sato and McLaughlin stated that both were translated and administered to samples of Japanese and American teachers. The Japanese survey assessed teachers’ goals, use of time, roles, responsibilities, and professional development activities. The American survey assessed organizational conditions, professional climate, student/teacher relations, and external support structures. Using these two surveys, Sato and McLaughlin (1992) stated that they were able to examine

...the differences in teachers’ roles and responsibilities in terms of four broad

contexts for teacher and teaching: 1) social norms, values, and expectations; 2) norms of the teaching profession; 3) organizational environment of the school context; and 4) character of teacher/student relations. (Sato & McLaughlin, 1992, p. 2)

Sato and McLaughlin (1992) concluded that there were both similarities and differences in teacher perceptions of their roles and responsibilities in the institutional contexts for teaching, the use of time, and professional development activities. Specifics noted for Japanese teachers were: longer hours of teaching (20), a broader teaching description with more in-school responsibilities that included counseling and administrative duties, and more nonacademic roles dealing with student hygiene, appearance, and out-of-school behavior. Japanese teachers participated in more professional development, and reported stronger, better-defined collegial relations at the school level than the American teachers. “Japanese teachers feel that they have relatively greater influence in in-school policy and more help from their fellow teachers. They also have greater belief that their professional efficacy derives from their own efforts and abilities” (p. 2).

In 1992, Shimihara and Sakai presented a paper regarding *Teacher Internship and the Culture of Teaching in Japan*. The aim, according to Shimihara and Sakai (1992), was to “explore how the culture of teaching mediated the implementation of the government-sponsored teacher internship” (p. 147). The data for their paper came from ethnographic research conducted in 1989 for a period of six months, and focused on three elementary public schools in Tokyo. The argument, according to Shimihara and Sakai (1992), was that the Government’s reform of teaching was bound to be ineffectual

without classroom teachers' active support for it.

In their paper, Shimihara and Sakai (1992) discussed topics regarding the internship: the background of internship, the internship program and its implementation, the culture of teaching and the supervision of internship, and out-of-school internship program relevance. Their findings "suggested that the culture of teaching measurably influenced the administration of internship in the first year. As a result, internship became ineffective if measured by the Government's expectations" (p. 147). In their view, the future of internship was unpredictable. Their study suggested that the culture of teaching would continue to be a significant factor in internship unless there was a drastic administrative intervention to alter its implementation.

In *Teachers are kind to those who have good marks: A study of Japanese young people's views of fairness and equity in school*, Smith and Gorard (2012) presented the results of a study of Japanese young people's views of being treated fairly in school, and considered the extent to which their experiences differed from their peers in schools in England. The study involved 1,191 students from nine Japanese junior high schools in their final year of study (Smith & Gorard, 2012). Data was gathered primarily through the use of a questionnaire dealing with the prevalence and character of injustice, the causes/sources of injustice, the effects of injustice, and the external factors influencing sense of justice (Smith & Gorard, 2012).

According to Smith and Gorard (2012), their findings suggested that "although Japanese students reported positive experiences in school, they were able to identify instances where their perceived treatment was unfair or inconsistent" (p. 27). Some of the instances included teachers having favorite students, and the unequal allocation of

rewards and punishments. Smith and Gorard (2012) stated that the reported experiences were similar to their English peers, and therefore they provided no evidence to support accounts of excessive academic pressures due to unfair teacher treatment. What Smith and Gorard (2012) did state, was that their research suggested that “teacher initial and continuing development would benefit from the inclusion of principles of equity” (p. 42).

In summary, the literature demonstrated that teachers in Japan face difficult tasks that are considered to be a part of their job duties. Japanese teachers are not only responsible for teaching their students, but they are also expected to be their students’ emotional and career guidance counselor. Some of the duties of a teacher in Japan include teaching, counseling, coaching, sponsoring extracurricular activities, leading school committees, and helping set curricular goals and school policies.

Although much is expected of teachers in Japan, they are afforded an in-service professional development program that has served as a model for other countries. In their first year of teaching, Japanese teachers benefit from both in-school and out-of-school training courses, as well as a mentor system that partners them with expert teachers in their curricular area. The community-based model of teaching makes a point of placing beginning teachers in continual contact with other experienced teachers. This idea to surround beginning teachers with more experienced teachers can be seen in everything from who they sit next to in their planning stations to which classrooms all of the teachers are assigned.

## Japanese Administrators

This section reviewed literature pertaining to Japanese administrators in Japanese education. Understanding the roles and duties of the Japanese administrator in Japanese private education was central to this study.

In the article, *Responsibility for Improving the Quality of Teaching in Japanese Schools: The Role of the Principal in Professional Development Efforts*, Bjork (2000) compared the role of principals in the United States and Japan in regards to professional development. According to Bjork (2000), teachers played a larger role than their counterparts in the United States in influencing school curriculum, teaching, and policy making. This, as Bjork (2000) pointed out, was due to deep-rooted cultural dynamics in Japan that recognized the high importance of teachers to mold the youth.

Bjork (2000) concluded the study by stating that professional development was viewed as important for the improvement of the quality of teaching, and therefore seen as more within the realm of teacher responsibilities. Due to this dynamic, Japanese principals acted more in the capacity of administrative coordinators, and less in the areas of school curriculum and teaching.

In the study, *The Comparison of Gender Distribution among School Principals and Teachers in Taiwan, Japan, and South Korea*, Huang, Yang, & Wu (2012) compared the gender distribution among school principals in Taiwan, Japan, and South Korea. The main purpose of the study was to explore the unique gender divide among school principals and teachers. The research methods employed in this study derived from document analysis, and descriptive data analysis – with the statistical data collected from



the Ministry of Education in each respective country, and supplementary data from the OECD dataset.

The study indicated that in Japan, although the ratio of female teachers was relatively high at 62.7% in primary school and 54.8% in secondary school (Huang et al., 2012), the ratio of female principals was lower when compared with Taiwan and South Korea. With only 17.9% of females in elementary principal roles, and 5% in secondary principal roles, Huang et al. concluded that the phenomenon of unique gender distribution was present in Japan, as well as the other two countries in the study. As they stated, “the difference between number of female teachers and number of female principals was significant” (Huang et al., 2012, p. 9). The study discussed systemic, cultural, and traditional reasons for this disparity, but ultimately concluded that it was still necessary to investigate the reason why it was less likely for female teachers to become principals – taking into account the factors affecting female teachers’ promotion to supervisors, and investigate whether such obstacles could be eliminated (Huang et al., 2012).

In the study, *Japanese and American Principals: A Comparison of Excellence in Educational Leadership*, by Willis and Bartell (1990), the intent of the study “was to determine how principals in each society perceived their roles as instructional leaders” (p. 108). Data for the study came from multiple sources; a literature review, informant interviews, and questionnaire surveys. The focus of the research was on secondary principals, specifically ones who “had already been recognized through a peer selection process as outstanding principals in their own nations” (Willis & Bartell, 1990, p. 109). From the survey questionnaires, Willis and Bartell stated that thick description was provided to identify characteristics of Japanese and American administrators that made

them effective. By comparatively examining two cultural contexts for effective models, the search for the excellent principal was greatly enhanced.

Willis and Bartell (1990) started by identifying the reasons for seeking the principalship in each country. The reasons for seeking the Japanese principalship were: realize my own educational ideals, promote educational excellence, no intention or reason to become a principal, appointed, ordered, superior's recommendation, had to, not seeking, and it was a natural process. Willis and Bartell also identified career ambitions. The career ambitions identified by Japanese principals were: retirement, education-related work in society after retirement, make our school educationally active, help students, do something helpful in society with youth, complete my present job, and doing my best.

Willis and Bartell (1990) concluded their research with a discussion of the rank order of qualities perceived as important by principals of their study. The rank order of Japanese principal qualities included, from greatest to least, moral character, relations with teachers, warmth and consideration, relations with students, understanding of the instructional process, intellectual knowledge, efficiency, and relations with parents and community (Willis & Bartell, 1990).

...although there are many differences between Japan and America, one of the most compelling findings of the... research is the remarkable similarity in beliefs characterizing 'effective schools', and in the principal's assumption of responsibility for providing leadership toward that end. Although the strategies for reaching this goal may be different... the end result, the effect or impact which reaches students in the classroom, is very similar. (Willis & Bartell, 1990,

p. 122)

In summary, this section was a presentation of the literature related to the Japanese administrator. The role of the Japanese high school administrator is more of an administrative coordinator, having less to do in the areas of school curriculum and teaching. Although there are female education administrators in Japan, the gender gap was identified as significant. This section also included the reasons Japanese administrators sought the principalship, their future career ambitions, and the qualities they thought were important to the profession.

### **Contribution to the Literature**

This dissertation will contribute to the literature on Japanese private secondary education administrators. Although there is research pertaining to post-war Japanese education reforms and societal issues, there is little research pertaining to the role of Japanese teachers - and even less concerning the role of the Japanese secondary public or private administrator. Willis and Bartell (1990) first identified the gap in the literature when they stated,

Because educational administrators in Japan have traditionally been drawn from, and are considered to be a part of, the teacher corps (indeed, the term for principal in Japanese, *kocho sensei* has the connotation of master teacher), the formal study of administrative roles is quite recent. Indeed, there is still no formal preparatory path for becoming an administrator separate from that for becoming a teacher (p. 108).

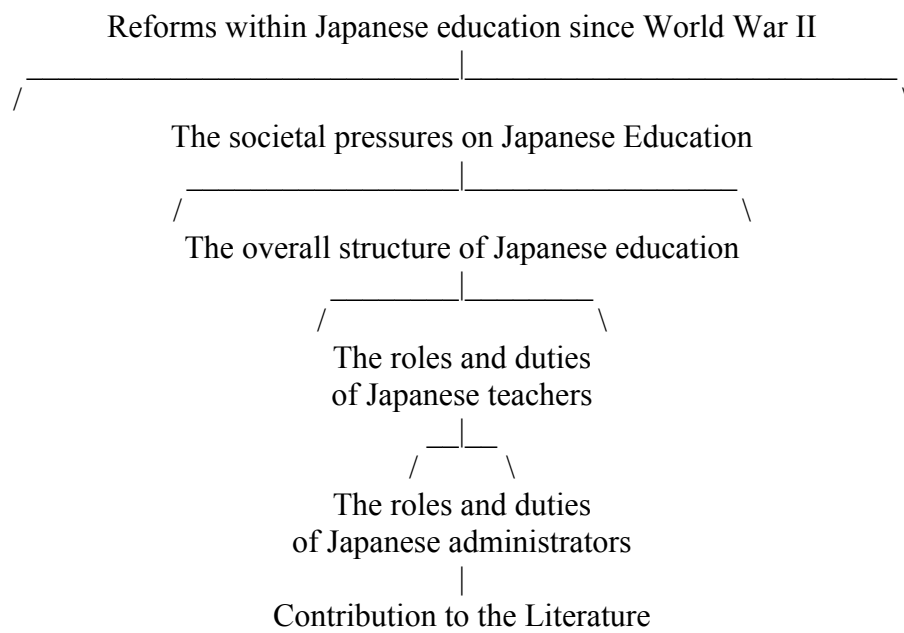
For this reason, there is little literature regarding the role of the secondary public or

private administrator in Japanese education.

Willis and Bartell (1990) stated that, as of the time of their research, there was “no study by Americans of Japanese educational administration, much less of the Japanese principal” (p. 108). With such a crucial role in the changing field of the Japanese education system, more studies and literature are needed to add to the knowledge base. The contribution of this research to the literature is that it addresses the gap pertaining to Japanese secondary private school administrators. The research presented in this study examined Japanese school administrative leadership, through the discussion of data gathered in interviews with administrative leadership at a Japanese private secondary school, Senshu University Matsudo Junior and Senior High School.

The literature map below (Appendix A) demonstrates the topics addressed in the literature review.

### **Literature Map**



## Definition of Terms

*Bukatsudo* - Bukatsudo (extracurricular school clubs) are "communities of practice" that employ a model of learning akin to apprenticeship, stressing imitation and repetition while socializing students into values and behavior demanded in adult society (Cave, 2004).

*Cabinet Office of the Japanese Government (CAO)* - The Cabinet Office of the government of Japan assists the general strategic functions of the Cabinet by drafting plans. It is an agency in the Cabinet of Japan and is responsible for handling day-to-day affairs of the cabinet. The Cabinet Office is formally headed by the Prime Minister (<http://www.cao.go.jp/index-e.html>, 2013).

*Central Council for Education (CCE)* – One of thirteen advisory councils to the Japanese Ministry of Education charged with making curriculum decisions. This council is appointed as needed, and lasts for three years from the appointment of members to the final submission of a formal report (<http://www.mext.go.jp/english>, 2013).

*Fundamental Law of Education (FLE)* – a law established in 1947 concerning the foundation of Japanese education that set regulations regarding such things as equal opportunity in education, compulsory education, coeducation, and social education. This law represented a radical means of education reform, replacing the pre-World War II Imperial Rescript on Education, which was based on Imperialist and Confucianist thought (Armstrong, 1976).

*Global Citizenship Education Research Project* – A project funded by the Ford Institute to examine the origin, development, and impact of the emerging global citizenship education movement (Motani, 2007).

*Ijime* – The Japanese term for bullying in schools (Cave, 2001).

*Imperial Rescript on Education* – The Imperial Rescript on Education articulated government policy on the guiding principles of education on the Empire of Japan. Emperor Meiji signed it in 1890 (Armstrong, 1976).

*Integrated Studies Program (IS)* – A program introduced in Japan in 2002, designed to increase teacher autonomy and to augment student learning by giving schools greater flexibility to explore unique student-generated projects (Bjork, 2009; Ellington, 2005; Motani, 2005).

*International Program for Student Assessment (PISA)* - The Program for International Student Assessment is an international assessment that measures 15-year-old students' reading, mathematics, and science literacy (Sui-Cho Ho, 2006).

*Japan Teachers Union (JTU)* – The Japan Teachers Union is Japan's largest and oldest labor union of teachers and school staff (Horio, 1986).

*Juku* - Tutoring schools in Japan (Cogan, 1984; Ranson, 1988; Rohlen, 1977; Shimihara, 1985).

*Kokoro* – The Japanese term and concept for the centrality of heart, or “the heart of things” (Sato, 2004).

*Kosei* – The Japanese term for individuality and personality (Cave, 2001).

*Kosei Jushi* – The Japanese term for the stress of individuality (Cave, 2001).

*Li Ko* – The ancient Japanese term for the ideal “good child” held by Japanese mothers (Ballentine & Altman, 2001).

*Liberal Democratic Party (LDP)* – The Liberal Democratic Party is a conservative political party in Japan (Horio, 1986).

*Meiji Period* – The Meiji period lasted from 1868 through 1912. This period represents the first half of the Empire of Japan during which Japanese society moved from being an isolated feudal society to its modern form (Beauchamp, 1987; Cogan, 1984; Kariya, 2011).

*Ministry of Education (MEXT)* – The Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology regulates aspects of the education process in Japan. MEXT is led by a minister, who is a member of the Cabinet and is chosen by the Prime Minister (<http://www.mext.go.jp/english>, 2013).

*National Commission on Excellence in Education* - The National Commission on Excellence in Education produced a report in 1983 titled *A Nation at Risk*. In a short summary of its findings called *The United States System of Education*, it presented an overall view on control and financing of education, organization and structure, and statistical data (Takayama, 2007).

*National Institute for Educational Policy Research (NIER)* – NIER is an organization that conducts basic and practical research surveys concerning education (Okuda & Hishimura, 1983).

*Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)* – The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development is an international economic organization of 34 countries founded in 1961 to stimulate economic progress and world trade (Beauchamp, 1987; Bjork, 2009).

*Prefecture* – 47 jurisdictions in Japan on the state/province level (Kida, 1986).

*Rinji Kyoiku Shingikai or Rinkyoshin* – The Ad Hoc Reform Council of 1984 was implemented by Prime Minister Nakasone, and produced four major reports over the span

of three years. It set the direction of education reform toward internationalization, information technology, lifelong learning, and individuality (Beauchamp, 1987; Bjork, 2009; Horio, 1988; Motani, 2005; Okada, 1999).

*Ronin* – A Japanese term which is used to refer to young people who have been unsuccessful in either finding a job or getting into school (Rhodes & Nakamura, 1996).

*Seishin Kyoiku* – The Japanese term for spiritual education (Saito & Imai, 2004; Sato, 1992; Sato, 2004).

*School Refusal Syndrome* – An identified condition in Japan where students refuse to go to school due to psychological, emotional, physical, social, or environmental factors (Ishikida, 2005).

*Shido* – The Japanese term meaning “to guide into the right path by teaching.” There are three types of shido: *gakushushido* and *seitoshido* related to the academic and the behavioral spheres of the school respectively, and *shinroshido* related to the children’s future lives on the basis of these two shidos (Shimizu, 1992).

*Shiken Jigoku* – The Japanese term for the period of time in which Japanese students prepare for, and take high school and university entrance examinations – also referred to as “examination hell” (Ishikida, 2005; Shimihara, 1985).

*Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers (SCAP)* – Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers was a title held by Douglas MacArthur during the Occupation of Japan following World War II (Armstrong, 1976).

*Yutori Kyoiku* – Yutori Kyoiku is a Japanese education policy that reduced the hours and content of the Japanese curriculum in primary education. It is translated as “low pressure” or “relaxed education” (Bjork, 2009; Decoker & Bjork, 2013; Motani, 2005).



## CHAPTER 3

### The History of Japanese Education

Education in Japan is undergoing many changes. These changes derive from a bureaucratic top-down system, and are a mix of political and cultural pressures. Beauchamp (1987) stated that problems and subsequent solutions were not recent, and had roots in earlier phases of post-war educational development in Japan. To better understand the climate within Japanese education, it is crucial to first look at the development of Japanese education - specifically in the post-war era. This chapter will discuss the major educational reforms that were undertaken in the post-war years, focusing on 6 major periods in the development of the Japanese education system. These time periods are: The Occupation of Japan from 1945-1952, The Post-Occupation Period from 1952-1960, Expansion in the 60s and 70s from 1960-1978, The Third Major Reform Period from 1978-1990, The Student Centered 90s from 1990-1999, and The Consequences of Yutori from 2000-2011.

Before looking at major educational reforms one needs to understand the structure of the Japanese education system. Using information compiled by the researcher from literature pertaining to the structure of Japanese education, Appendix B diagrams the roles at each level of the Japanese education system. The bureaucracy of the education system has been the target of critics over the recent past - it has been branded as inefficient and slow to respond to the needs of society. Kida (1986) described the top-down structure in Japan as being centered on a parliamentary cabinet system; the Emperor appoints the Prime Minister, who in turn appoints 20 ministers of state, which

forms the cabinet. One of these ministers takes charge of the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture (Monbusho).

Kida (1986) explained that Japan is divided into 47 prefectures (To Do Fu Ken) that “subsume” their local municipalities within their jurisdiction, yet are independent in terms of administration. From there, 5-member education boards are established both at the municipal and prefecture levels. The prefectural governor or municipal head nominates these boards respectively. Established in 1948, these boards oversee education, and science and culture. These boards do not oversee universities or private education, which are under the guidance of Monbusho and prefectural governors. What this means then is that within each prefecture and municipality there are two agencies overseeing educational administration - the board of education and prefectural/municipal offices.

As stated by Kida (1986), the Center On International Benchmarking (2012), and Bjork (2009), at the national level Monbusho prescribes national standards and educational policies, suggests laws and regulations, prepares budgets, promotes education, science and culture, and is directly responsible for 180 higher education institutions and 780 private institutions of higher learning. The prefecture, according to Kida (1986), handles a wide range of responsibilities that call for uniform treatment among municipalities. More specifically, both Kida (1986) and the Center On International Benchmarking (2012) stated that the prefecture establishes and maintains upper-secondary schools, pays the salaries of educational personnel at compulsory schools, and appoints their placement among the municipalities. Private institutions (not including higher education) are under the jurisdiction of the prefectural governor. From there, compulsory schools fall under the jurisdiction of the municipal governments.

## **The Occupation of Japan: 1945-1952**

Following the major reforms of the Meiji, scholars (Beauchamp, 1987; Cogan, 1984; Kariya, 2011) stated that a second set of reforms took place in Japan following World War II. These reforms were undertaken in the hopes of transforming Japan from a military dictatorship into a democracy. Following surrender in 1945, Japan's education came under scrutiny for the role it played in prewar and wartime Japanese military expansion (Okada, 1999). It was the belief of the American occupying forces that Japanese education had been consciously used by Japan's political leaders to "...advance the ends of the state, including economic development, national integration, and military power and conquest" (Beauchamp, 1987, p. 302). As described by Beauchamp (1987), "when Japan finally surrendered, the education system was... in disarray; 18,000,000 students were idle, and 4,000 schools had been destroyed" (p. 302).

Beauchamp (1987) and Armstrong (1976) asserted that, given the wartime role affixed to Japanese education and the state of educational affairs following the war, the American forces recognized that a new educational system would be necessary to achieve the objective of transforming Japan into a democracy. In the eyes of American policy makers, the main problem with the Japanese education system was that it was not at all like the American system. Due to this, American-initiated reforms were designed with the American system as a guide. Beauchamp (1987) stated that this was complicated by the need to transform Japan's prewar, Confucian-influenced society (filial piety, high moral standards, group harmony, and loyalty to leadership), into one more "congruent with the goals of the United States in Japan" (Beauchamp, 1987, p. 304).

According to Beauchamp (1987) and Armstrong (1976), American forces rejected many elements of prewar Japanese education. They sought to break up the centralized power of the Ministry of Education, by granting local communities control of their own educational destinies. Beauchamp (1987) stated that two laws enacted during this time were important for education, the Fundamental Law of Education and the School Education Law – both promulgated in 1947.

The Fundamental Law of Education, as described by Armstrong (1976) and Beauchamp (1987), represented a complete reversal of course from the 1890 Imperial Rescript, stating that:

...education shall aim at the full development of personality, striving for the rearing of the people sound in mind and body, who shall love truth and justice, esteem individual value, respect labor and have a deep sense of responsibility, and be imbued with the independent spirit, as builders of a peaceful state and society. It also established the important principle that all major educational regulations would be made by parliamentary procedure. (Beauchamp, 1987, pp. 304-305)

According to scholars (Beauchamp, 1987; Cogan, 1984; Godo & Hayami, 2002; Kariya, 2011; Okada, 1999 & 2002), the School Fundamental Law (Gakko Kihon Ho) created the American-style 6-3-3-4 system of schooling. This was done to replace the original multitrack system of prewar days, as described by Beauchamp (1987). As further explained by Beauchamp (1987), Cogan (1984), Godo and Hayami (2002), Horio (1986), and Kobayashi (1967), three years of junior high were added to the already-existing six years of primary education to form the new compulsory system. Three years of higher-level secondary education were also added to senior high school. This, according to

Beauchamp (1987), “raised the school-leaving age to fifteen, and legitimized coeducation” (p. 305).

Under the School Fundamental Law... Lower secondary schools shall have the purpose of providing ordinary lower secondary education based on the foundation laid in elementary school and according to the physical and mental development of the pupils, and Upper secondary schools shall have the purpose of providing ordinary upper secondary education and professional education based on the foundation laid in lower secondary school and according to the physical and mental development of the pupils. (Okuda & Hishimura, 1983, p. 572)

Scholars (Beauchamp, 1987; Godo & Hayami, 2002; Ishikida, 2005; Kariya, 2011) stated that vocational courses were offered in conjunction with educational courses that were designed to “foster greater individuality, freedom of inquiry, development of the ‘whole child,’ coeducation, greater flexibility in the curriculum, and a radical reform of Japan’s written language” (Beauchamp, 1987, p. 304). According to Godo and Hayami (2002), vocational school graduates did not face discrimination in advancing to universities like in the pre-war system, and gender discrimination against such opportunities was eliminated.

According to Beauchamp (1987) a number of scholars, both Japanese and American, pointed out that many of these American-styled reforms like coeducation, comprehensive schools, and local control were dysfunctional when implemented in the Japanese model. Japanese authorities had little choice but to accept these changes however, and it was these changes that became the basis for a series of educational laws implemented between 1947 and 1949. According to Ellington (2005), “Even though the

Japanese adopted the American 6-3-3 model during the U.S. Occupation after World War II, elementary and secondary education is more centralized than in the United States” (p. 1).

Beauchamp (1987) asserted that by 1949, the major accomplishments of the occupation had been completed, and emerging “Cold War” issues served to change the political and strategic imperatives of the United States. American policy makers reassessed their plans for Japan, and sought to ally themselves closer to “conservative Japanese interests” (p. 305). With a transformed post-war Japan, the United States turned its attention westward toward China and Korea. Japan was given its autonomy on April 28, 1952, the day on which the San Francisco Peace Treaty went into effect. With this, as Beauchamp (1987) stated, “The reforming zeal of the Americans had abated, and the environment in Japan underwent an important change” (p. 305).

### **The Post-Occupation Period: 1952-1960**

According to Armstrong (1976), Beauchamp (1987), and Okada (1999) some within Japan thought that the reforms of the Occupation had gone too far, and had done considerable damage to Japanese traditions and values. In light of the new politics and social systems of the emerging 1950s, the Japanese government began to reassess the recent reforms in an effort to correct what they saw as excesses – and education did not escape this reassessment. “Many of the American-initiated reforms were either scrapped or modified to fit traditional Japanese models” (Beauchamp, 1987, p. 306).

This first reform affected was the 1948 Board of Education Law, as indicated by Beauchamp (1987) and Saiti and Imai (2004). This law was originally designed to

implement the power transfer from the centralized Monbusho to local communities through locally elected boards of education. The law was abolished, and, starting in 1956, board members were appointed by prefecture governors or local mayors. This brought the school board under local administration, and therefore once again under the jurisdiction of Monbusho.

Denouncing the insufficiency of the Fundamental Law of Education, Armstrong (1976) and Saiti and Imai (2004) stated that Monbusho favored the pre-war Imperial Rescript on Education – specifically the “need for a return to Confucian moral education, the core of pre-war school education” (Saiti & Imai, 2004, p. 586). According to Beauchamp (1987), this moral education (shushin) associated by Americans as a vehicle for pre-war racial supremacy, Japanese expansion, and divinity of the emperor, could not remain in the curriculum. But the Japanese viewed its removal from education as excessive (Beauchamp, 1987).

Because the Japanese viewed the removal of moral education as excessive, moral education was re-initiated in 1958 (Okada, 2002; Saito & Imai, 2004; Sato, 1992; Sato, 2004). The term dotoku was used in place of the term “shushin” (Beauchamp, 1987, p. 306). According to Saiti and Imai (2004), this turn in politics “affected the direction of arguments in philosophy of education and pedagogy, particularly in the context of opposition between the Ministry of Education and the Japan Teachers’ Union” (p. 586). Beauchamp (1987) stated, that the conservative Monbusho increasingly challenged the Japan Teachers’ Union, as it was a carry-over from the Occupation days. Further, in the new “Cold War” climate, the Monbusho claimed the JTU was devoted to fomenting a

communist revolution, and its members were therefore unfit to teach the youth of Japan. This served to strain ties between Monbusho and the JTU that have not improved.

According to Beauchamp (1987), this Japanese “counter-reformation” received support from the business community who wanted a system more closely aligned with the needs of industry. The education system they favored meant more and better vocational courses, and one that was more consistent with their traditions and culture. The people of Japan also saw this “counter-reformation” as a positive step forward, arguing as Beauchamp (1987) noted, that a centralized system ensured every child “equality and opportunity” through equal facilities, a uniform curriculum administered by Monbusho, equal access to the same textbooks, teachers of equal competence, and uniform national standards. This support from Industry leaders and the Japanese people in general emboldened the Monbusho to “expand the net of educational opportunity more widely than ever before in Japanese history”, and to “improve the quality of the education offered to students” (Beauchamp, 1987, p. 308).

These changes, as Beauchamp (1987) and Okuda and Hishimura (1983) stated, were reinforced by a post-war baby boom following World War II in Japan. With post-war birthrates rising from 1,576,000 in 1945 to 2,718,000 in 1947, a virtual flood of children reached elementary school age in 1953, and consequently junior high in 1959, and senior high in 1962 (Beauchamp, 1987). This surge, according to Okuda and Hishimura (1983) and Shimizu (1992), led to a movement in which people started calling for the admission of all applicants into the public upper secondary school. This brought the question of the identity of upper secondary school back to the fore of public discourse.



To address this situation, Okuda and Hishimura (1983) stated that Monbusho granted the Boards of Education competency to conduct entrance examinations to public upper secondary schools. Monbusho issued a circular stating:

In view of the aims of upper secondary schools it is not adequate for the Boards of Education to admit to upper secondary school those persons who are judged to be unable to study due to mental or physical difficulties or those who seem to be unable to complete upper secondary school curricula. (Okuda & Hishimura, 1983, p. 576)

This was seen as Monbusho's support for an admission policy open only to qualified children. However, in the same circular Monbusho stated:

In view of the dissemination of upper secondary education and the principle of equal educational opportunity, it is desirable that as many candidates as possible should be allowed to enter school. (Okuda & Hishimura, 1983, p. 576)

According to Beauchamp (1987) and Kariya (2011), this trend put stress on the educational system, as it forced them to rapidly expand their educational facilities. In addition to the "baby boom", the country saw a significant rise in the percentage of students continuing beyond the elementary and secondary levels. This was due to the new 6-3-3-4 system, and an economic post-war revival that saw a period of high economic growth in the 1960s and first half of the 1970s. As a result, Beauchamp (1987) stated that in 1958 Monbusho issued four five-year plans designed to address issues of class size, staffing needs, and other issues. This was followed in 1968 by a second round of revisions focused on increasing the level of study in mathematics, science, and other subjects.

### **Expansion in the 60s and 70s: 1960-1978**

There are various views on the nature of the economic growth of Japan in the post-war years. Cummings (1982) argued that, “the most impressive covariant is the emergence of a new educational system which has rapidly expanded in scale and has openly promoted more equal and democratic orientations” (p. 17). Beauchamp (1987) and Godo and Hayami (2002) argued that Japan saw a period of unprecedented economic growth, triggered by the restoration of sovereignty and the outbreak of the Korean War. They said this dynamic was no less important for Japanese education than the Occupation reforms. Regardless of the cause, Beauchamp (1987) stated:

Increases in per capita income kept pace with this dizzying trend and soon Japan's standard of living reached new levels of prosperity. Per capita income, which had stood at barely \$200 in the early 1950s, rocketed to \$2,300 per year in 1972. (p. 312)

Beauchamp (1987) argued that there were some important consequences stemming from Japan's newfound economic surge like, “increased social mobility, a quickened flow of young people from rural to urban centers, a declining birthrate, and an unprecedented expansion of employment opportunities” (p. 312). Shimizu (1992) stated that this in turn led to an increasing demand for formal education, which educational officials found difficult to keep up with.

Educational policy during the 1960s and 1970s was therefore consciously designed to encourage and foster economic development. Reflecting this, the “Report on the Long Range Educational Plan Oriented Toward the Doubling of Income” was prepared and released by a technical sub-committee of the Economic Planning Agency's

Economic Council in 1960. This report stressed the importance of “education as an investment in developing human resources”, and called for increased and “better science and technical education to meet the industry’s need for skilled workers” (Beauchamp, 1987, pp. 312-313).

Beauchamp (1987) pointed out that the industrial sector of Japan generally agreed on the need for a functional differentiation of the higher educational structure. Beauchamp (1987) also highlighted the industrial sector’s need for increased specialization in courses like science and engineering, and Kobayashi (1967) highlighted their need for a system of five-year technical schools. Although some of the major Japanese firms at the time were nostalgic for the pre-war multi-track system, where one’s school determined their type of job and highest position within an organization, they saw the strengths in the new system and began to use them to their advantage. They did this by taking advantage of newly released school rankings to determine staffing and positions (Beauchamp, 1987).

This fact, according to Beauchamp (1987), was not lost on high school students who saw the need to attend universities that were now in the upper ranks of the new hierarchy. This widespread acceptance of higher education as a prerequisite to upward mobility sent increasingly more numbers of high school graduates through universities (Duke, 1986). As a consequence, this reinforced the importance of the rigorous university entrance exams (Beauchamp, 1987; Gordon, Fujita, Kariya, LeTendre, 2010).

Although some Japanese thought there was too much emphasis placed on the examinations, Beauchamp (1987) argued that very little had been done to change this situation. The reason, as he pointed out, was that Confucian values still held sway in

Japanese society. These values served to stress that the value of the exams was not in the information necessarily, but rather in the intensely difficult and often lonely experience in the preparation of these exams. These trials strengthened “one’s character and moral fiber” (Beauchamp, 1987, p. 314). As Shimihara (1985) stated, “Japanese schools generally emphasize effort rather than innate ability. They encourage the formation of attitudinal and behavioral characteristics that lead to high achievement, such as diligence, endurance, concentration, attention to detail, and quick anticipation” (p. 420).

According to Beauchamp (1987), some students preparing for entrance examinations attended expensive voluntary supplementary cram schools. According to Ishikida (2005) and Shimihara (1985), the term for the exams frequently used among the Japanese - *shiken jigoku* or ‘examination hell’ - was “symptomatic of the profound tension that these exams create in the lives of Japanese adolescents” (Shimihara, 1985, p. 419). Regardless of how many thought there was too much emphasis placed on these examinations, “over 90 percent of the relevant age cohort graduate from high school in Japan, and almost two-thirds of them have taken a college preparatory curriculum” (Beauchamp, 1987, p. 315).

In 1971 Japan invited the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) to send a team of education experts to advise it on future directions (Bjork, 2009; Beauchamp, 1987). The OECD report, argued Beauchamp (1987), was “probably the clearest view of Japan’s educational problems” (p. 319). Although it praised the role education played in the economic development of Japan, it strongly criticized the over-centralized control, over-emphasis on standardization in the

name of egalitarianism, and the conformist nature of the curriculum. The report recommended:

...for some practical measures aimed at the development of students' personalities through a more flexible and less pressured scheme of education, with more free time, more curricular freedom, more diversity in extra-curricular activities and more co-operation among pupils. The time may have come... to devote more attention to such matters as co-operation, in addition to discipline and competition, and creativity, in addition to receptivity and imitation. (Beauchamp, 1987, p. 319)

According to Beauchamp (1987), the OECD report was important in feeding the reform debate in Japan.

In agreement with the OECD report in 1971, Horio (1986) noted that the JTU organized a Council for Educational Reform that was first presented in 1974. Under the title, "How to Reform Japanese Education" it criticized the standardization and the lack of flexibility present in the educational system and administration. It called for more flexibility, wider accessibility, and increased respect for the "subtlety of human development." This report examined the educational situation from infant to higher education, and had much influence on both teachers and parents (Horio, 1986).

Although the reform debate sparked by the OECD report was growing to a peak, Japan suffered the first oil crisis in 1973 (Beauchamp, 1987). Because of this, Japan's economy ground to a halt, and experienced a negative growth rate for a period. What resulted was a tightening of the national budget, and educational funding (Inui, 1993). Beauchamp (1987) argued that for many of the same reasons that educational enrollment

increased during the boom of the 1960s, the reverse applied to why it began to contract after 1973. “Post-war Japan was successful in creating an egalitarian and mobile society, but the oil crisis of 1973 significantly reduced those opportunities” (Beauchamp, 1987, p. 321).

### **The Third Major Reform Period: 1978-1990**

As Beauchamp (1987) described, the later 1970s and early 1980s internally were a “run up” period of sorts to Japan’s educational reform movement of the late 1980s. As Montani (2005) stated, the new trends of the 1960s and 1970s that were developing in education outside of Japan – development education, world studies, global education, and environmental education – found their way into Japan in the 1980s and 1990s.

Development education (*kaihatsu kyoiko*) for example, was introduced formally into Japan in 1979 as collaboration between the Public Centre of United Nations, the UNICEF office in Japan, and the United Nations University.

This time period saw several important reports that called for various educational reforms. The nature of dissatisfaction with education at the time, according to Cave (2001), differed according to the commentator. The right wanted more stress on patriotism, Japanese tradition, and moral education; the left wanted the opportunity of high school education for all and the elimination of high school entrance exams; teachers’ unions wanted smaller class sizes and more resources; and business leaders wanted more emphasis on creativity (Cave, 2001).

Cave (2001), Beauchamp (1987), Montani (2005), and Bjork (2009) pointed to specific identified problems within education that led to much of the reform discussions.

One problem was the lack of creativity that some attributed to the rigidity of the Japanese education system. As Cave (2001) argued, “Japanese education had failed to produce creative people needed to compete in the new world economy of the information age” (p. 175). Another problem was the percentage of Japanese students that chose to drop out. Beauchamp (1987) pointed out that although the drop out rate was relatively low by 1983 and constituted only 2.4% of all senior high students, the drop out rate had shown a significant increase every year since 1974 – which was the first year relevant statistics were collected.

Constituting a major portion of the call for educational reform was what some Japanese said were poor social behaviors and societal ills (Ballentine & Altman, 2001; Cogan, 1984; Cave, 2001, Friehs, 2004, Sui-chu Ho, 2006). Cave (2001) pointed to violence at school (*konai boryoku*), bullying (*ijime*), school refusal, and classroom breakdown (*gakkyu hokai*). Beauchamp (1987) pointed to what some saw as advanced nation disease (*senhinkoku-byo*) brought on by the inevitable and alarming result of modern industrial society, i.e. increases in the divorce rate, juvenile crime, school violence, and other social ills. These behaviors were shocking to adults in Japan, as they violated a fundamental of Confucian-influenced traditions, specifically respecting and obeying teachers.

Bullying also became a national concern during the 1980s (Friehs, 2004; Ishikida, 2005). An increasing number of students found suicide as the only way out, or refused to go to school for prolonged periods of time (periods of 30 days or longer) for reasons other than illness. Called School Refusal Syndrome (*tokiky-ohi*), Ishikida (2005) stated that it was defined by MEXT as,

...the phenomenon where students do not go to school or cannot go to school, despite a desire to go to school, due to some psychological, emotional, physical and/or social factor, and environment, with the exception of illness or economic factors (p. 122).

In addition to bullying, more incidents of violent outbursts were reported and teachers lost control over classes to the point of not being able to teach their classes (Akiba, Shimizu, & Yue-Lin, 2010; Cogan, 1984; Ishikida 2005; Motani, 2005; Tamura, 2004).

Many causes to these problems were identified (Beauchamp, 1987; Cave, 2001; Montani, 2005). Cave (2001) stated that much of the criticism was leveled at the Japanese education system itself for being too uniform and rigid, too focused on university entrance exams, and too concerned with “inculcating knowledge at the expense of self-motivated inquiry and creative thought” (p. 175). All of these attributes were claimed to suppress creativity and individuality - resulting in increased violence, school refusal, and other problems (Fackler, 2004; Oshio, Ueno, & Mino, 2010; Tamura, 2004).

In addition to systematic educational-induced causes, Cave (2001) pointed to societal causes – specifically the declining educational role of the home (*katei*), and local society (*chiiki shakai*). In periods leading up to the 1980s, children acquired much of their moral and social education informally from parents, extended family, neighbors, and other neighborhood children (Holloway, Fuller, Hess, Azuma, Kashiwaga, & Gorman, 1990; Sato, 1992; Sato, 2004). Due to increased pressures to study, more organized enrichment activities (*okiekogoto*), and the rise of indoor, sedentary activities like television and video games, children spent less time playing and interacting with peers and family members (Fuess, 2006). This trend, coupled with more families where both



parents worked outside the home, meant that fewer children were learning about the world of work and adult society from direct experience (Cave, 2001).

Montani (2005) pointed to some of the same causes as Cave (2001), but went on to discuss the stress Japanese students felt from the pressure to eventually work for Japan's major corporations – to become elite business men. Through much of the post-war recovery, the country's priority was targeted at its economic success in the world, i.e. the “good life.” Sensational media coverage fueled these problems and prompted progressive educators and the general public to call for educational reform. The perception was that “traditional Japanese schooling was not working anymore, and was hurting the future of its own citizens” (p. 315).

Reports during the late 1970s and early 1980s stirred up widespread discussion that contributed to the appointment of the Ad Hoc Reform Council (Rinji Kyoiku Shingikai or Rinkyoshin) in 1984 (Beauchamp, 1987; Bjork, 2009; Okada, 1999). According to Bjork (2009), Horio (1988), Motani (2005) and Okada (1999), this was not a move implemented by Monbusho, but by the Prime Minister Nakasone himself. Motani (2005) stated that this reflected the will of a special interest group of business executives (Zaikai). Zaikai was demanding educational reforms along the lines of internationalization and individualization, in an effort to create a more cost-effective, flexible education system through decentralization, deregulation, and privatization. The hope was that this would produce more assertive and creative Japanese workers for the economic development of the country in a competitive world economy.

Researchers (Beauchamp, 1987; Bjork, 2009; Cave, 2001; Horio, 1986; Motani, 2005; Saito & Imai, 2004; Sui-chu Ho, 2006) discussed the importance the Ad Hoc

Council had over the reform agenda of the 1980s. As Cave (2001) pointed out, the Ad Hoc Council was particularly influential in the development of the government's educational reform agenda. This high profile council produced four major reports during a span of three years.

Cave (2001) said that although there were very few concrete proposals, this council set the direction of education reform toward internationalization (*kokusaika*), information technology (*johoka*), lifelong learning (*shakai kyoiku*), and individuality (*koseika*). It was the stress on individuality (*koseika*) that was the first principle of educational reform laid down by the Rinkyoshin's first report in 1985. Saito and Imai (2004) and Bjork (2009) pointed out that the Council took the view that education had been excessively under state control. It went on to state that the emphasis was on securing equal conditions for all children, and in effect a forceful assimilation that served to suppress the creativity of the child. The Council called for the deregulation of education, the reduction of state control, and promoted privatization.

In all of this rapid economic, technological, and societal change, Duke (1986) and Motani (2005) stated that Monbusho had to negotiate their desire for a tight rein over the vast network of educational laws and regulations with the societal pressure for a more "relaxed" education (Motani, 2005). To Monbusho, this educational change needed to be very carefully planned out, and cautiously implemented in gradual stages (Duke, 1986).

### **The Student Centered 90s: 1990-1999**

Educational critics of the 1980s and 1990s were committed to the progressive ideas that emphasized individuality, self-realization, and freedom in learning. They

argued that cramming education, standardized education, uniform teaching, and strict school management obstructed authentic school learning and the development of the individual and creativity. As Cave (2001) stated, by the mid-1990s, educationists and officials within Monbusho saw the influence of Rinkyoshin as “decisive in producing a situation in which individuality had come to hold a major position in debate about the state of Japanese education” (p. 177).

According to Motani (2005), the 1990s in Japan saw the country go through a series of shocking events that forced everyone in Japan to ask fundamental questions. The Japanese were forced to reassess their life goals, values, and the purpose of education. Motani (2005) stated that the economic collapse of the early 1990s brought the realization that there was no guarantee of life-long employment. Two catastrophic events in 1995 – a major earthquake in the Kobe/Awaji area in which the government was slow to respond, and a Sarin-gas attack by a religious cult in Tokyo – served to greatly disturb and unnerve the Japanese.

This series of events left a disturbing sense among the Japanese in general. The report prepared by the Prime Minister’s Commission on Japan’s Goals in the Twenty-first Century, entitled *The frontier within: individual empowerment and better governance in the new millennium*, summarizes this unsettling Japanese social and political climate... It was no longer possible to ignore the need for a radical educational reform. (Motani, 2005, pp. 315-316)

Two reforms of the 1990s stood out according to Cave (2001), curricular reform and the introduction of the 5-day school week. A revision to the curriculum, published in 1989, was the introduction of what was referred to as a new view of academic

achievement (*atarashii gakuryokukan*). This was a shift toward emphasizing students' interests and motivation, as well as the knowledge constituting academic achievement. The new curriculum instructed teachers to harness the interests of the pupils, and emphasized individualized teaching, independent study, and experiential activities (Cave, 2001).

Cave (2001) stated that in 1991, high school reform was the subject of a Chukyoshin report recommending increased diversification (*takoya*) of high schools, and the introduction of a new type of course in high school, the Integrated Course (IS) (*sogogakka*). This new course was in line with the Rinkyoshin-led ideology of individuality and self-motivated study. This report also advocated for a greater number of diverse specialist high school courses to allow the development of various kinds of talents.

The second major school reform according to Cave (2001), was the move to a 5-day school week. The motive for this was to relax the instruction in schools - giving students more experiential learning time outside of school, as well as to align Japanese work and lifestyle practices with other industrialized nations. This replaced the previous 5-day, plus Saturday, week that was standard up until 1992. Originally this was to be only one Saturday a month starting in 1992, but expanded to two Saturdays in 1995, and the official 5-day week started in 2002. The 5-day school week had been a passing proposal by the Rinkyoshin, and was not entirely envisioned when the 1989 curriculum was officially published. What resulted were teachers struggling to fit a 6-day curriculum into a 5-day week.

Cave (2001) and Motani (2005) asserted that following the Rinkyoshin, another very important policy direction was produced in 1996 by the Central Council on Education, Chuo Kyoiku Shingikai or Chukyoshin. This report, *The Model of Japanese Education in the Perspective of the Twenty-First Century*, effectively authorized the societal view of the failure of Japanese education and socialization. It deplored the decline in socialization, children's ethics, social skills (*shakaisei*), and independence (*jiritsu*) – attributing it to the decline in local community.

According to Cave (2001), the report urged the need for more creative self-starters to cope with a rapidly changing society, and portrayed Japanese children as neither well-socialized or creative and self-motivated. The report saw the answer to these problems as less pressurized lives both inside and outside of school. The report advocated for a slimmed-down curriculum, smaller classes, more elective subjects, and a relaxation of exam competition. In place of the paper test, the report advocated for a “more diversified selection procedure with interviews, essay-based examinations, school reports, and school recommendations” (pp. 178).

According to Cave (2001), after the tone of revisions in 1989 there was a change in content in the next revision of 1999. Following suggestions of prior reports and studies, hours of traditional compulsory subjects were cut to make room for a new cross-disciplinary subject called Integrated Learning. The aims of Integrated Learning were to “foster the ability to think, learn, and explore independently and creatively, and to discover and solve problems by oneself” (Cave, 2001, p. 179). In some cases, social studies, music, mathematics and science courses were being cut by 23%, 34%, 18% and 17% respectively at the junior high level.

Cave (2001) argued that the 1999 curriculum revisions were some of the most radical since the implementation of the national curriculum in the 1950s, and reflected the approach laid down by the reports of the Rinkyoshin and Chukyoshin. In contrast to the very detailed descriptions for other subjects, only general guidelines were given about how to teach the Integrated Learning elective subjects. The argument for this, as stated by Cave (2001), was to give teachers a greater deal of freedom to determine what would be taught in those new areas. This, in turn, would provide more educational choice, more integrated planning of the learning process, and allow students a school life more free from exam worries where they would be able to develop particular talents (Cave, 2001).

In response to the reform measures of the 1980s and 1990s, both strong and critical responses dominate the discourse; highlighting the polarization of the educational reform debate in Japan. Cave (2001) argued that less attention had been focused on the reform measures of curricular reform and the 5-day school week, and more on “peripheral reforms that affected fewer students – those centered largely around left-wing and right-wing political agendas” (pp. 182-183). Represented on the left by the teachers unions, was the belief that all children should receive a common education - thus ensuring the creation of citizens who could act as independent agents that a democracy demands (Tamura, 2004). In this view, the stratification of pupils was undesirable – including the overtly meritocratic streaming that the placement examinations create (Gordon et al., 2010).

In contrast, represented by industry and Japanese corporations on the right, were those arguing for the rigorous exam-driven system with specialty schools to teach trade areas. In 1997, according to Saito and Imai (2004), a renewed conservative emphasis was

put on the reinforcement of moral education. This was done to tackle the alleged moral decline of the youth. This Monbusho-initiated program called for the ‘Education of the Heart’ (Kokoru no kyoiku) included provisions of advice and guidance for the young, and the rigorous discipline of children in school and home (Saito & Imai, 2004; Sato, 1992; Sato, 2004).

### **The Consequences of Yutori: 2000-2011**

According to Motani (2005), Bjork (2009), and Decoker and Bjork (2013), significant changes came in 2002 to public schools throughout Japan. In 2002 Monbusho officially started implementing the major educational reform initiatives of the mid to late 90s, which were considered part of the third major educational reforms. These reforms stemmed from the Central Educational Council of the Ministry of Education’s “The model of Japanese education in the perspective of the twenty-first century” released in 1996 (Decoker & Bjork, 2013). This report argued for the need to encourage ‘zest for living’ (ikiru chikara) and ‘relaxed education’ (yutori) for students (Motani, 2005).

According to Motani (2005), ‘relaxed education’ referred to a relaxed, humane state – as apposed to a competitive, stratifying environment. Monbusho perceived this as necessary to cultivate ‘zest for living’. Motani (2005) stated that Monbusho implemented these slogans in the recognition that Japanese children were suffering from undue competition, due largely to the entrance examination system that had become increasingly more intense over recent years. The increased mobility of society and access to upper education had led to a system where schools were forced to recognize the increased importance of university examinations. Schools had become a place where

students “had to hide their sense of self worth and conform”, and where emphasis had increasingly been placed on the memorization of knowledge as an aim of education.

Bjork (2009), Ellington (2005), and Motani (2005) stated that the major reform initiatives Monbusho implemented in 2002 - namely the 5-day school week, the reduction of curriculum content (one third of the national curriculum), and the period for Integrated Studies - were needed so that schools and students could focus on analysis and critical reflection. Bjork (2009) and Motani (2005) argued that the 2002 educational reform initiatives were clearly influenced by the ideas from Zaikai, as they aimed to cut costs, and prepare independent and creative students for entry into the work force. Although the philosophy behind curriculum content reduction and Integrated Studies was seen as progressive and child-centered, “the origins served industry and Japanese corporations more than an egalitarian ideal or democracy” (Motani, 2005, p. 314).

According to Bjork (2009) and Takayama (2008), as early as 1999 a debate had begun centered around a crisis in Japanese students’ scholastic standards. A series of publications proclaiming the academic underpreparedness of college students encompassed the entire K-12 educational system. Initially this debate centered on scholastic decline, but soon turned its focus on Monbusho Yutori curricular reform. The argument was that the Monbusho-issued curricular policy changes of the 1990s had eroded academic standards, and that Yutori would further the slide of academics (Bjork, 2009). According to Takayama (2008), this debate was countered by scholars who backed Monbusho’s student-centered Integrated Studies approach. They were overshadowed however by media and political figures that joined the chorus against the reforms.



The debate, according to Sui-chu Ho (2006) and Takayama (2008), was pursued with relatively little longitudinal data to assess any scholastic trend. On this background of data shortage, the Program for International Student Assessments (PISA) of 2000 and 2003 were released, which attracted considerable media attention (Takayama, 2008)). Sui-chu Ho (2006) and Takayama (2008) went on to state that the PISA 2000 findings were released in December of 2001, as those claiming crisis were dominating the debate. The reports demonstrated that Japanese students had ranked first in mathematical literacy, eighth in reading literacy, and second in scientific literacy. The media “expressed positive surprise given the debate, and went on to describe the performance of the Japanese students as top class” (p. 393).

As described by Takayama (2008), following the release of the PISA 2000 findings, crisis-claimers once again gained ideological dominance in the debate. In an effort to address growing public concerns over the perceived declining academic standards, Monbusho issued its Appeal for Learning (Manabi No Susume) in January 2002. Released just three months before implementation of the yutori reform, this policy undermined the idea of relaxed education and underlined “solid academic ability” (tashikana gakuryoku). That same year a governmental organization connected with Monbusho, the Global Industrial and Social Progress Research Institute (GISPRI), issued what was called “an urgent educational proposal to halt scholastic collapse” (p. 394).

Shortly before the release of the PISA 2003 findings in 2004, Nariaka Nakayama was appointed as the new Education Minister (Takayama, 2008). Unlike education ministers before him, he publicly expressed criticism of the yutori reform by issuing “Revive Japan!” (Yomigaera Nihon!), in which he cautioned that Japan would become a

small nation in the East unless immediate actions were taken to boost scholastic achievement. His report proposed fostering competition, introducing national achievement testing, emphasizing scholastic basics, and establishing a school assessment system. Although not directly attacking yutori, the report signaled intent to introduce policies in direct opposition. Takayama (2008) emphasized that the Ministry was prepared to reorient the yutori reform even before the release of the PISA 2003 data in December of 2004.

Takayama (2008) stated that the PISA 2003 results stunned the nation when they were released. Major newspapers compared the 2000 and 2003 reports in which Japanese students slipped from first to sixth in mathematical literacy, maintaining second place in scientific literacy, and fourth in a newly created problem-solving literacy category. The press coverage focused particularly on the score drops in mathematics (from first to sixth) and reading (from eighth to fourteenth) as it echoed those claiming crisis; reporting that the Ministry had acknowledged that Japan was no longer at the world's top level.

What the media failed to address, according to Takayama (2008), was that there was no statistically significant difference between Japan and the top performer in mathematical literacy, Hong Kong. This statistical significance had been discussed in the 2000 PISA report, but was largely ignored in the 2003 report. He stated:

What distinguishes the reporting on PISA 2003 from the PISA 2000 coverage is the clear attempt by the Ministry and, in particular, Education Minister Nakayama to control the media discourse and thus shape public perception of the findings.

All three newspapers quoted Nakayama and unidentified Ministry bureaucrats

openly acknowledging that Japan had lost its top-level ranking. (Takayama, 2008, p. 396)

Although Takayama (2008) stated that there was no statistically meaningful change from PISA 2000 to PISA 2003, it did not come to light in public discourse, and the media's negative reporting was unfounded.

According to Takayama (2008), due to the growing concern over the scholastic crisis, Monbusho had begun to introduce policy initiatives that would redirect yutori reform, introduce a national achievement test, re-establish its new administrative role, and alter the post-war foundations of Japanese public education. Ellington (2005) pointed out that, although test scores fell slightly as of 2005, Japanese students consistently ranked among the leaders in international mathematics tests.

Due to the ongoing debate concerning the overall effects of yutori, the reform was quite controversial among junior and senior high school educators (Bjork, 2009). Ellington (2005) stated that some upper-level educators perceived the Integrated Studies as “dumbing down” the national curriculum, and were concerned that the reforms would ultimately result in less-educated students. According to Bjork (2009), the Center On International Education Benchmarking (2012), and Kariya (2011), this unease on the part of the public over yutori also saw a shift in enrollment numbers. Where public schools were once seen as a superior educational path to university entrance, private schools began to grow in popularity, as they did not have to follow yutori. Ellington (2005) stated that more than 29% of Japanese students attended a private high school by 2004.

As of 2011, according to the Center On International Education Benchmarking (2012), 97.9% of the population 15 and older was enrolled in senior high school – despite

the fact that higher secondary education was not compulsory. Just as impressive, very few dropped out. With only a 2-3% high school dropout rate, upwards of 90-95% of high school students completed upper secondary education by the age of 18. Entrance Exams, according to Kariya (2011), Brinton (1998), and Gordon et al. (2010), continued to play a role in determining which upper secondary schools one was admitted to. Students were sorted into different schools, which consequently created a hierarchy as institutions compete for students (Bjork, 2009).

Compulsory education in Japan ends with junior high school, and admission to public high school is governed largely by one's score on the prefectural standardized entrance examination and, to a lesser extent, by junior high school grades. Within each school district, there is a finely graded hierarchy of public, general academic high schools. There are also private academic high schools and public vocational high schools. Consideration for admission to these is not governed by residence in the local school district as is the case with the public, general academic high schools (Brinton, 1998, p. 445).

### **Japanese School Structure in Secondary Education**

In the Japanese school structure, the model of junior high schools resembles the American model more closely than does their high schools. Kariya (2011) stated that the Japanese secondary education had three distinct features... egalitarian lower secondary education in junior high school, examinations for entrance into upper secondary education - with a clear hierarchical structure among senior high schools based on those results, and domination of general curricula.

After World War II, lower secondary education, characterized by egalitarian features, paved the way for more of a universal access to upper secondary education. Until recently in the Japanese system, there was no curricular differentiation or ability grouping, and these schools were funded on a per-head basis between the different school districts. According to Shimizu (1992), as Japanese students received largely the same, equal education no matter where they were situated, more students were pushed towards secondary advancement. These comprehensive, egalitarian lower secondary schools in turn avoided the early differentiation elsewhere like in Britain (Kariya, 2011).

During the 1960s and 1970s, household incomes increased dramatically due to the rapid Japanese economic growth. This economic growth increased demand for workers with more skills and education, which in turn placed more value on the high school diploma in the labor market. With the increase in household incomes, more families were able to pay senior high school education tuition, and opportunities for upper secondary education increased steadily. In 1950 the enrollment rate for senior high schools was 42.5%, which increased and topped out at 90.8% in 1974. Since 1974, according to Kariya (2011), enrollment had stayed well above the 90% threshold.

As of 2011, 97.9% of the population 15 and older was enrolled in senior high school – despite the fact that higher secondary education was not compulsory. Just as impressive, very few dropped out. With only a 2-3% high school dropout rate, upwards of 90-95% of high school students completed upper secondary education by the age of 18 (Kariya, 2011). As all of these graduates (theoretically) were eligible for university admission, the candidate pool expanded tremendously, thus fueling expansion of enrollment (Kariya, 2011).

In contrast to the egalitarian lower secondary education model, upper secondary education is not compulsory. However, as of March 2010, upper secondary public schools stopped requiring tuition when Monbusho passed a measure intended to abolish these fees (Center On International Education Benchmarking, 2012). According to the Center On International Education Benchmarking (2012), schools received enrollment funds of \$100 a month (per student) that they then applied to the cost of their students' tuition. The student was then responsible for making up the difference of any insufficient funds. Those students who came from a low-income household were provided further subsidies of up to \$200 a month.

In addition to the financial barrier, admittance is based on successfully passing entrance examinations. Scholars (Ellington, 2005; Gordon et al., 2010; Kariya, 2011; Ranson, 1988; Rohlen, 1977) pointed out that students were sorted into different schools based on these entrance exams. This created a hierarchy as institutions competed for students, which reflected on the school's selectivity and prestige (Gordon et al., 2010). According to Ranson (1988),

Entrance exams direct students to academic or vocational schools, each with a clear status ranking. One-third of those who continue formal education attend little-respected, terminal vocational schools. But even when studying practical fields in those schools (agriculture, industry, commerce, fisheries, home economics, nursing), they are taught primarily through fact-filled textbooks and lectures, just as in academic schools. (p. 755)

According to Ellington (2005) and Ishikida (2005), although there were Japanese high schools that specialize in vocational, commercial, and industrial studies, the majority of students that progressed to high school enrolled into general high schools that provided a more diversified curricula. Topics at these general schools covered a broad range of academic topics like sciences, arts and music, mathematics, and social studies.

With increased overall student enrollment rates in the 1970s, general high school enrollment also rose. As of 2009 the general curricula amounted to 72.3% of the overall Japanese high school enrollment. With less than 20% of students enrolled in vocational studies, general education became the dominant curricula as secondary education was universalized (Kariya, 2011). Thus, according to Kariya (2011)

a stratified system of senior high schools provided academically differentiated ‘general’ education at the upper secondary level, rather than different streams of education that served to limit students’ opportunities to higher education access (p. 249).

Because of this dynamic, Japanese secondary education in the post-war era had no institutional barrier for college entrance, and Japan experienced a rapid growth in higher education (Kariya, 2011).

The rate of Japanese students in higher education reached almost 75% among the youth of Japan in this first decade of the new millennium – almost 50% of them were enrolled in four-year universities. This was in part due to policies that were enacted to increase academic and college preparatory programs in secondary education, which sought to widen the routes leading to a university education. What resulted, according to

Kariya (2011), was a more flexible and instructionally differentiated system with expanding enrollment and increased opportunities for higher education. These indicators suggested that Japanese higher education had realized a more universal stage of access. This placed Japan far ahead of European countries, but also provided an “ideal case study in education to examine equity, enrollment, and expansion issues” (Kariya, 2011, p. 245).

The Center On International Benchmarking (2012) stated that as of 2012, the Japanese government spent less on its schools when compared with other countries. With a very small administrative staff of only a principal and a couple of assistant principals, schools were functional, but unadorned. The main focus of the funding was on students and learning. In 2008, Japan spent 4.9% of its GDP on education – lower than the OECD average of 5.9%. However, Japan spends \$9,673 per student, higher than the OECD average of \$8,831 (Center On International Benchmarking, 2012).

According to Kida (1986), the Center On International Benchmarking (2012), and Bjork (2009), the Ministry of Education (MEXT) in Japan set teacher and administrator pay scales, created supervisory organizations, established national standards, and set policy and the curriculum (as seen in Appendix B). The Center On International Benchmarking (2012), Ellington (2005), and Kida (1986) stated that the Ministry was also in charge of allocating funds to the prefecture and municipal authorities for schools. From there, the local governments were responsible for supervising schools, school budgets, personnel hiring, and various special programs. As Ellington (2005) stated, “the percentage of national funding for high schools is quite low, with prefectures and municipalities assuming most of the costs for public high schools” (p. 1).



At the prefecture level, five government-appointed members comprised the board of education. This board of education was responsible for many activities, like the appointment of teachers to primary and lower secondary schools, operating upper secondary schools, appointing the superintendant of education, and funding the local municipalities. Within these local municipalities, there was a mayor-appointed board of education (Center On International Benchmarking, 2012). According to Ellington (2005) and the Center On International Benchmarking (2012), the responsibilities of this board ranged from recommending teacher appointments to the prefectural board of education, to choosing MEXT-approved textbooks, providing in-service teacher and staff professional development opportunities, and overseeing the daily operations of primary and lower secondary schools.

At the school level, according to Bjork (2009), it was the principal who determined the school schedule, managed teachers, and took on any other management roles as required. It was the teachers who were responsible for devising how to teach the curriculum, creating lesson plans, and contacting parents (Decoker & Bjork, 2013; Ishikida, 2005). Teachers also played an important role in setting policy and practice in their schools (Bjork, 2009; Cogan, 1984, Friehs, 2004).

Bjork (2009) stated that, “research on classroom practice indicates that teachers do indeed take advantage of chances to shape curricula to fit their instructional objectives and student needs” (p. 28). According to Cogan (1984), “...balancing the external demands, the teachers collectively agree on the program they want to pursue for their school... then they do their best to realize it” (p. 465). Teachers help administrate, set school policy, teach classes, supervise clubs and extracurriculars, counsel students,

provide holistic care for students (Bjork, 2009; Cave, 2004; Cheng, 1996; Cogan, 1984, Friehs, 2004; Ishikida, 2005; Rhodes & Nakamura, 1996; Sato & McLaughlin, 1992; Shimihara, 1992; Tsuneyoshi, 2001), and “must keep moving ahead to prepare their students for the examinations” (Cogan, 1984, p. 466). All of what Shimihara (1985) described as “a comprehensive approach to the motivation of their students” (p. 420).

According to the Center On International Benchmarking (2012), schools were then evaluated by municipal and prefectural board of education supervisors - typically comprised of former teachers and administrators, who provide guidance on such things as curriculum and teaching, as well as general school management.

### **Problems Facing Japanese Secondary Education**

Kariya (2011) stated that there were bold curricular and pedagogical reforms in the 1990s and 2000s, due to a domestic perception that Japanese education was only instilling knowledge in a one-sided manner. According to Wong (2003), education in Japan was entering a new phase of accountability, and critical phase of reform. “Political leaders seemed more willing to be involved in educational reforms in order to raise student performance” (p. 242). In 1992 and 2002 revisions to the national curriculum in junior high school were implemented; they followed the ideals of a new accountability concept of academic ability and achievement (Kariya, 2011). According to Kariya (2011), this concept was a dramatic departure from the status quo.

Called Yutori Kyoiko, or relaxed education, the reforms of 1992 and 2002 aimed to provide for more room and growth in overall achievement. These reforms were seen as a solution to a vast range of domestic and international challenges, and were labeled, “the

most significant since the end of World War II” (Ellington, 2005, p. 2). In an attempt to lessen the competition and stress from the exam structure, stimulate students to be independent and self-directed learners, and create a “Zest for Living”, one third of the content of the national curriculum was eliminated in this new, relaxed education model. The school week was reduced to 5-days, and a school period for Integrated Studies was introduced (Motani, 2005).

Kariya (2011) and Bjork (2009) stated that although these reforms seemed benign and appeared to be working in addressing the ills of the 1980s, middle-class urban parents worried that the Yutori reforms would lower their own student’s academic achievement - and in turn their future job prospects (Bjork, 2009). This mistrust in the reforms led to wealthier families fleeing from public secondary schools, and moving to private, six-year schools (Bjork, 2009; Cogan, 1984; Kariya, 2011, Takeuchi, 1991).

According to Ishikida (2005), private six-year schools required payment of tuition and have entrance examinations, but were viewed by some Japanese parents as an important advantage for higher education. School placement, according to scholars (Cogan, 1984; Ranson, 1988; Rohlen, 1977; Takeuchi, 1991), was so important that since these schools were expensive, “students who come from wealthy families have an educational advantage... however, many parents of modest means make great financial sacrifices to insure that their children attend the best preparatory schools” (Cogan, 1984, p. 466). Scholars like Cogan (1984), Ranson (1988), Rohlen (1977), and Shimihara (1985) stated that parents even paid for extra tutors (*katei kyishi*) and cram schools (*juku*). As Ranson (1988) stated, “Parents anxious to help their children pass the narrowly

academic entrance exams to secondary schools and universities increasingly pay for private schools or tutors...” (p. 753).

In Japan almost all students are admitted to high school based upon entrance examination performance. Since entering a high-ranked high school increases a student’s chance of university admission or of obtaining a good job after high school graduation, over half of Japanese junior high students attend private cram schools, or *juku*, to supplement their examination preparations. (Ellington, 2005, p. 1)

According to the Center On International Education Benchmarking (2012) and Ellington (2005), although there were more public upper secondary schools, 29% of upper secondary schools were classified as private – and that percentage was growing (Ellington, 2005, p. 1). Scholars (Brinton, 1998; Cogan, 1984; Ishikida, 2005; Kariya, 2011; Takeuchi, 1991) stated that in Japan, secondary education had come together over the long period of Japan’s modern educational history, into a clear hierarchical structure of institutions that were differentiated on students’ ability – and with that, instructional prestige.

Public knowledge about the “quality” of different high schools is very extensive. Private publishing companies release statistics on the minimum standardized test scores for students entering different high schools, which is the best single indicator of a school’s academic quality. The government publishes a thick volume of statistics each year on the number of university-bound and work-bound students at every high school in the nation, and this gives employers a very accurate picture of which schools will have large numbers of seniors looking for

jobs. (Brinton, 1998, p. 445)

Kariya (2011) and Takeuchi (1991) explained that private institutions, much like higher education, were increasingly dominating Japan's upper secondary education.

Due to issues of community-perceived inequity, and differentiation in education quality, both private and public education in Japan entered a new critical phase of reform and accountability (Wong, 2003). In the old method, the Japanese education system relied on internal efficiency ratings of teachers by the assistant principals. That changed however, with political leaders more willing to be involved in educational reforms in an effort to raise student performance (Wong, 2003).

Wong (2003) stated that in the climate of Japanese secondary education reform, teachers and principals were "beginning to focus on the mechanisms that would enable them to conduct ongoing self-evaluation of the effectiveness of their professional practices" (p. 242). According to Friebs (2004), local education boards in Japan implemented redesigned teacher evaluation methods. The task of enacting these reforms started with the principal, and continued down to the teachers themselves. Japanese principals acted as administrative coordinators, where teachers played a far more active and influential role in the school curriculum, teaching, and policy-making (Bjork, 2000; Friebs, 2004).

The Center On International Education Benchmarking (2012) said that as of 2009, teachers were also required to renew their education personnel certificates every 10 years, after undergoing professional development to ensure that their skills and knowledge are up to date. Not only did this ensure teachers were up-to-date in pedagogy, but it also

provided a way in which to remove teachers not willing to upgrade or renew their certificates (Center On International Education Benchmarking, 2012).

According to Collinson and Ono (2001) and Wong (2003), there were many reasons for increased self-evaluation and analysis in Japanese secondary education. Education in Japan faced ongoing challenges for better service. Among the more prominent challenges as seen by Japanese teachers were bullying and class disruptions (Akiba et al., 2010; Cogan, 1984; Friehs, 2004; Motani, 2005; Tamura, 2004). Tamura (2004) pointed out that “the experience of student violence in Japan in the late 1970s and the early 1980s intensified the perceived necessity of school rules” (p. 57).

According to Tamura (2004), from 1973 to 1983, violence against teachers by junior high school students increased every year. In the midst of pervasive student violence, rules were used to restore safe environments to the schools (Tamura, 2004). Bullying became such a central issue in Japan that, according to Akiba et al. (2010) and Decoker and Bjork (2013), the Japanese Ministry of Education crafted educational policy that differentiated between characteristics of bullies, victims with gender and socio-economics as a factor, and whether or not the occurrence happened inside or outside of school (Decoker & Bjork, 2013).

During the late 1970s and early 1980s, Japanese secondary schools designed and implemented very detailed and restrictive rules in an effort to address growing classroom disruptions - what they correlated with declining national test scores (Takayama, 2007). According to Takayama (2007), “the education ministry made public the implementation of a zero-tolerance policy in Japanese schools through draconian disciplinary policy” (p. 440). Due to this, Japanese schools were increasingly criticized in the 1980s and 1990s as

“an emblem of the regulatory style of Japanese education” (Tamura, 2004, p. 52).

According to scholars (Fackler, 2004; Oshio et al., 2010), media, education scholars, administrators, teachers, parents, and students were all active participants in controversies arising from school rules.

These newly implemented school rules were regarded as far-reaching in their “meticulous regulation of the students’ lives” (Tamura, 2004, p.52). Therefore, much of the criticism about these school rules rested on whether any specific rules violated the Japanese constitution (Tamura, 2004 & 2007). According to Tamura (2004), the Japan Bar Association published a 291-page manuscript in 1985, documenting 985 secondary schools in Japan to be in violation of human rights.

The violations centered on issues regarding the pursuit of happiness and freedom of expression in reference to hairstyles and prohibited accessories, the right to own or hold property in reference to students prohibited from bringing such things as watches or snacks, and the right not to be searched. In order to enforce such rules, schools occasionally conducted searches (Tamura, 2004 & 2007). Tamura (2004 & 2007) stated that the rules of students’ belongings and the manner of rule enforcement violated articles 29 and 35 of the Japanese constitution. School rules were claimed to be a “social problem based on their unconstitutional restrictions on individual rights” (Tamura, 2004, p. 53).

According to Tamura (2004), teachers and administrators agreed on what they perceive as the positive benefits of the school rules. They argued that school rules allowed teachers to better identify troubles in students’ minds, as rule violations in attire or hairstyles might be indicative of a larger problem. Teachers and administrators said that school rules facilitated increased interaction between student and teachers – in turn

building better student-teacher relationships that may curb problematic behavior (Tamura, 2004).

In an interview of a high school principal in Kyoto conducted by Tamura (2004), it was noted that to some degree school rules were linked in Japanese society to the socialization of youth - through personal demeanor one learned how to become a citizen (Holloway et al., 1990). “At secondary schools, we need to build upon what they learned in the family. That is, schools teach how to be a part of groups and suppress individual desires” (Tamura, 2004, p. 58). Critics however contended that these school rules were obsolete, and did not meet with the cultural trend of post-scarcity Japan (Tamura, 2004 & 2007).

According to Tamura (2004), the culture of Japanese people became increasingly more oriented to individuality and consumerism during the 1980s and 1990s. In emphasizing and promoting conformity, some teachers and principals sought to resist this shift towards individualism and consumerism. In an effort to address the growing chorus of people saying Japanese schools were becoming inequitable, some teachers and school administrators pointed out the promotion of equality through conformity. Albeit at the local school level and not on a national level, they argued that school rules were beneficial in “masking or hiding the diverse socio-economic differences between students” (Tamura, 2004, p. 59). Others, including educators, called for the adaptation of rules to fit the newly emerging fashions and lifestyles.

In a study conducted by Smith and Gorard (2012), they found that although Japanese students reported positive school experiences, some identified instances of perceived unequal or inconsistent treatment. Some of these instances included teachers



having favorite students, and unequal allocation of punishment and rewards (Smith & Gorard, 2012). Proponents of school rules stated that through conformity and standardization, problems like bullying, psychological problems, and differential treatment by teachers and students would be eliminated (Tamura, 2004).

The justification of school rules based on equality, according to Tamura (2004), conflicted with critics' claims of human rights violations, which said these rules were a clear violation of freedom of expression. A 2004 study of Japanese secondary teachers and administrators by Tamura brought up the fact that both teachers and administrators identified the function of these school rules as to maintain order and routines - in addition to promoting equality. In Japan, these disruptions were seen as reflecting poor teacher quality (Tamura, 2004).

According to Wong (2003), teacher burnout in large urban districts became more common due to the pressure from the public for increased teacher accountability.

According to Katsuno (2010),

Although the old schemes merely involved unilateral efficiency rating of teachers by head teachers, the new schemes feature apparently development-orientated and collaborative elements such as goal-setting and assessment meetings with head teachers, lesson observations, and self-reviews of performance and competence” (p. 293).

The theory was that improved self-evaluation strategies would help teachers better manage competing demands. These self-evaluations were removed from the evaluations of curriculum and instruction that came from students and parents, and the performance assessment standards that were implemented by school boards (Katsuno, 2010; Katsuno

& Takei, 2008). These self-evaluations were not used by principals for employment recommendations or compensation (Katsuno & Takei, 2008; Wong, 2003).

One issue of contention to come out of this push for greater teacher accountability and evaluations dealt with who should determine the new benchmarks, as well as the instruments for gathering teacher evaluation information (Katsuno, 2010; Katsuno & Takei, 2008). According to Wong (2003), the preference by the prefecture seemed to be the principals. The prefecture seemed to have granted a fair amount of power to the principals, to ensure that they took the leadership in the design and implementation of this process. This idea was met with oppositions from the teachers unions, which preferred an alternative instrument that gave more power to teachers and parents in determining what types of information was gathered (Wong, 2003).

According to Wong (2003), another issue to emerge from this debate concerned the use of gathered self-evaluation information. The big questions were: a) Should the evaluations be published - thereby giving parents and the public greater opportunity to engage in the process? b) Would the school personnel benefit from increased voices from the parents and community? c) Should the evaluation process remain largely internal to education professionals within the school? And, d) How much variation would there be among schools in the implementation of this new self-evaluation model?

### **The Role of the Administrator in Japanese Secondary Education**

According to Willis and Bartell (1990), there was attention brought to the education offered to students in Japan, as well public concern for high achievement among high school students. There was the perception of Japanese schools in need of

reform (Willis & Bartell, 1990). The monumental task of enacting these reforms started with the principal, and continued down to the teachers themselves. Japanese principals acted as administrative coordinators, whereas teachers played a far more active and influential role in the school curriculum, teaching, and policy-making (Bjork, 2009).

In a survey questionnaire of Japanese administrators, Willis and Bartell (1990) contended that Japanese schools identified key dynamics for effective schools - specifically a positive school climate, the entire staff working to foster a caring attitude, a safe and orderly environment, an administration that is to support the faculty and staff and to serve students, and there is a great deal of involvement in the decision-making – including input from faculty, staff, parents, and the community. In addition, the school has clearly set goals and high expectations (Willis & Bartell, 1990).

As an important symbolic figure in the school and an embodiment of the traditions and character of the school, the position of principal in Japan was crucial, as “ultimate responsibility for the school and the actions of the students is in the hands of the principal” (Willis & Bartell, 1990, p. 119). In Japan, according to Bjork (2000), the principal was personally responsible for any negative action by any student or teacher. This stress led to the occasional report of the suicide of a principal due to the shame a student or staff member has brought to the school’s reputation (Bjork, 2000).

Stern and distant, principals are super-parent figures, and yet symbolize at the same time the intimate relationship that exists between the Japanese teacher and student... The principal’s role in a Japanese school is, above all else, to mediate and articulate common goals between disparate groups. (Willis & Bartell, 1990, p. 119)

According to Willis and Bartell (1990), the road to the principalship in Japan was highly centralized in terms of selection and placement, which served to discourage some from becoming a principal. As Willis and Bartell (1990) identified, the Japanese system established who was the best man for the job, in what was seen as a kind of natural process. Although there was no formal process to becoming an administrator in the Japanese system, there were a series of examinations leading progressively to each position. “With no formal classes established to help prepare the individual for taking the exam, course guides are the only available preparatory items for these tests” (Willis & Bartell, 1990, p. 113).

According to Willis and Bartell (1990), educational administrators in Japan were traditionally drawn from the larger pool of teachers. The term for principal in Japanese is *kocho sensei* or master teacher, and the principal is considered the ultimate teacher. “He or she has probably been chosen from the ranks, a senior teacher who has had long experience with students. Because of this, formal study of administrative roles is fairly recent. There... is still no formal path to becoming an administrator separate from that for becoming a teacher” (Willis & Bartell, 1990, p. 119).

Willis and Bartell (1990) stated that because Japanese administrators were seen primarily as teachers, Japanese administrators had a far greater average of years of experience in education (19.75) than compared to their counterparts in the United States (7.33) before becoming an administrator. Willis and Bartell (1990) stated that “the Japanese leader has also had more preparatory administrative experiences, and has taken the position at a later age, with the mean age being 59” (p. 111).

There are few Japanese secondary principals that are women. In a 2008 multi-national OECD report on the unique gender divide among school principals and teachers, titled *Improving School Leadership: Volume 1 Policy and Practice*, the OECD reported that as of 2007, the ratio of female principals in Japan was very low when compared to male principals. The ratio of female principals in elementary schools was only 17.9%, and the number of female principals in secondary education was even lower than that at less than 5% (Huang, Yang, & Wu, 2012; Japanese Ministry of Education, 2012).

According to Willis and Bartell (1990), Japanese principals gave many reasons for ascending to the principalship. Among the top reasons were: realizing their own educational ideals and promoting educational excellence, a superior's recommendation, it was a natural process, and a teacher's role is limited in improving education. As stated by Willis and Bartell (1990), Japanese principals did not seek the position; the commitment of Japanese principals was to the work-group, not to career advancement - as seen in other places like the United States. Although salary advancement was one of the top reasons in the United States for going into administration, Japanese administrators only made 10-20% more salary than teachers with the same experience, and did not list money as a reason for the position (Willis & Bartell, 1990). According to Willis and Bartell (1990), data indicated that principals in Japan had "a strong commitment to the service function of their positions, to serving others" (p. 113).

At the heart of the successful Japanese education model was how the Japanese dealt with personal matters in every level of their schools, and the principal was the ultimate authority in facilitating and coordinating interpersonal relationships (Willis & Bartell, 1990). Willis and Bartell (1990) stated that there was a tremendous amount of

emphasis placed on social order and a commonly shared identity and purpose. As they described, some important descriptors included “dedication, high morale, motivation, obedience, discipline, acceptance and group-centredness” (Willis & Bartell, 1990, p. 112). A personal commitment to the common goal was of ultimate importance. Cooperation and harmony were “valued above all else” and lay “at the heart of the Japanese emphasis on quality in an organization’s internal relations and activities” (Willis & Bartell, 1990, p. 119).

According to Willis and Bartell (1990), there were some differences in the organization of schools and division of responsibility for leadership between the United States and Japan. Average school enrollment was larger in Japan. With approximately the same amount of teachers, the result was larger class sizes in Japan that ranged around 45 students per class. There were fewer full-time Japanese administrators on average at 2.2 compared with 2.8 in the United States, less “other” professional staff at 3.4 compared with 8.8 in the United States, and about half the support staff at 10.2 compared with 20 in the United States (Willis & Bartell, 1990). All this translated into fewer personnel with which to share responsibilities.

In a 1990 study conducted by Willis and Bartell, titled *Japanese and American Principals: A Comparison of Excellence in Educational Leadership*, Japanese administrators were asked to rank areas of responsibility for instructional leadership. The list, from most important to least important, was:

- Recruiting/hiring outstanding teachers
- Evaluating performance of teachers
- Articulating goals of school to public

- Articulating goals of school to staff
- Reviewing and determining school's educational goals
- Managing resources allocated for instructional use
- Providing orderly atmosphere for learning
- Accepting responsibility for student behavior in school
- Providing supportive climate for teachers
- Involving teachers in decision-making
- Responding to community expectations
- Introducing new instructional methods to teachers
- Accepting responsibility for student behavior outside of school
- Selecting/reviewing of curriculum materials
- Conveying society/community values to students
- Emphasizing student achievement
- Arranging school events
- Devising instructional strategies
- Evaluating pupil progress (Willis & Bartell, 1990, p. 118)

What's notable in this list, according to Willis and Bartell (1990), was the placement of recruiting/hiring outstanding teachers at the top of what Japanese administrators see as their main area of responsibility. With typically 5 applicants per job, dependent on desirability of location, competition was intense in Japan, as the position of teacher was associated with prestige, good working conditions, a high salary, and stable prospects for continued future employment (Cogan, 1984; Willis & Bartell, 1990). As described by Willis and Bartell (1990), "Considerable 'networking' takes place at the

time of teacher recruitment, selection and placement, with principals vying with each other for the best pick of the new crop of teachers” (p. 118).

Willis and Bartell (1990) pointed out the division of duties from the prefectural, municipal, and school levels represented in the ordinal ranking of self-perceived principal duties. In terms of structure, those duties associated with principals ranked high, as those duties generally assigned to school boards and teachers ranked lower. Unlike American principals who were a strong visible presence to students, Japanese principals were more actively visible to the teachers and outside community. “For the Japanese principal, an effective school is characterized by a focus on instructional leadership in the sense of a natural expectation or trust that his teachers will do their best at all times” (Willis & Bartell, 1990, p. 121).

### **The Demographics of Senshu University Matsudo Junior and Senior High School**

Senshu University Matsudo Junior and Senior High School is located in the Chiba Prefecture of Japan - located in the Kanto region and greater Tokyo area. According to the website *Chiba: Chiba Prefecture*, Chiba prefecture was established in 1873, and has a rich military history - from the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-1905 to military buildup in the 1930s and World War II. During the occupation of Japan following World War II, American and Japanese planners carefully laid out plans for industrial expansion in the north, as well as increased agricultural production. The industrial areas that were created in Chiba prefecture are still important centers of industrial production today (<http://www.pref.chiba.lg.jp/english>).



As detailed on its website, *Chiba Prefecture*, Chiba has one of the wealthiest populations in Japan – ranking fifth highest in the country, due to its strong industry, commerce, and agriculture; 70% of the population is employed in the service sector, 25% in industry, and 5% in agriculture. The city of Matsudo is located in the northern portion of the Chiba prefecture, with a population of 484,578 and a density of 7,900 persons per sq. kilometer. Like Chiba prefecture, Matsudo experienced rapid economic growth and a construction boom as a major suburb of Tokyo. As of 2013 Matsudo is the third-largest city in Chiba prefecture.

According to their website, Senshu University Matsudo Junior and Senior High School is a prestigious private school in Chiba prefecture that focuses on learning English. Their goal is:

...to develop a school that not only lays the foundations for its students, but also helps their aspirations be realized through use of the tangible facilities of the school... and the conceptual structures of the school, such as the course system, the curriculum, and our helpful, warm-hearted teachers. ([http://www.senshu-u.ac.jp/english/about/affiliated/matsudo\\_high\\_school.html](http://www.senshu-u.ac.jp/english/about/affiliated/matsudo_high_school.html), 2013)

Senshu Matsudo was established in 1959. In 2010, on their 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary, Senshu Matsudo entered in to a sister-school relationship with Lincoln Southwest High School in Lincoln, Nebraska. As described on their website, Senshu University Matsudo Junior and Senior High School “works to provide a superior quality of education”, which includes a high level of English communication. Senshu Matsudo, like other upper secondary schools, has specialized its curriculum. While offering a general curriculum covering a wide range of areas, the focus of Senshu Matsudo is English language

proficiency. To serve its focus, Senshu Matsudo employs native English-speaking educators, and has an entire hall (Ambition Hall) designated as a center of English learning.

According to the Senshu Matsudo website, as of 2002, Senshu Matsudo has adopted a unique solution to the perceived societal problem of poor preparation for higher education. Called the Course System - it is a style of learning that “aims to continue Senshu Matsudo’s leadership in education.” When students take their entrance exams, they are able to choose courses that,

...cater to each student’s individual academic needs and development. Our school’s original learning style is aimed at delivering courses that follow a precise curriculum based on the students’ future university choices, flexibly coupled with a rich variety of supplementary programs. ([http://www.senshu-u.ac.jp/english/about/affiliated/matsudo\\_high\\_school.html](http://www.senshu-u.ac.jp/english/about/affiliated/matsudo_high_school.html), 2013)

From there, students have the option to change their course selections between their 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> grades, with limitations to some transfers based on “close examination of the student’s academic record.” In grade 11 students are divided into the science and humanity courses respective of their course, and in grade 12 “further branch off into private and public university paths” ([http://www.senshu-u.ac.jp/english/about/affiliated/matsudo\\_high\\_school.html](http://www.senshu-u.ac.jp/english/about/affiliated/matsudo_high_school.html), 2013).

Two different course paths determine their university prospects. As Senshu Matsudo describes it, their “E Course” is intended for students who’s aim it is to enter exclusive public universities – known for their difficult entrance exams, and their “A Course” is intended for those seeking admittance recommendation to Senshu University,

or high-ranking private or state universities. There is also an “S Course”, a special course for sports-oriented students – with Senshu Matsudo students going on to sports universities.

## CHAPTER 4

### Methodology

#### **Introduction – Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to examine school administrative leadership at a private high school, Senshu University Matsudo Junior and Senior High School. The previous chapters established the relevance of the topic and provided a review of the literature regarding the study. This chapter provides the framework for the qualitative case study.

#### **Research Design**

The research design was a multiple case study focusing on five Japanese secondary education administrators at Senshu University Matsudo Junior and Senior High School. I used a case study approach for this study.

Multiple methods of data collection occurred. As Silverman (2000) discussed, one uses different sources of research to corroborate each other. Data collection started through an examination of primary and secondary documents pertaining to the post-war history of the Japanese education system. From there, the primary means of data collection was through Interview questions. The interview questions were derived from the findings of historical documents and research studies. I also gathered observations during the interviews with the participants.

The study's focus was on the role of the Japanese secondary administrator at Senshu University Matsudo Junior and Senior High School.

**Central Research Question:**

What is the leadership role of the secondary administrator at Senshu University Matsudo Junior and Senior High School?

**Sub-Questions:**

- (a) What were the post-war changes implemented in Japanese secondary public and private education?,
- (b) What is the structure of Japanese secondary public and private education?,
- (c) What are the problems facing Japanese education?,
- (d) What role does the Japanese administrator play in Japanese secondary private education?,
- (e) How do Senshu University Matsudo Junior and Senior High School and its administrators represent the Japanese secondary private education system?

**Sampling**

This study employed Purposeful Sampling and Purposeful Selection (Creswell, 2007; Maxwell, 2005; Merriam, 1998; Richard & Morse, 2007; Silverman, 2007).

Purposeful Sampling was used to decide the times, settings, and individuals who can provide the necessary information to answer the research questions. Creswell (2007) described purposeful sampling as, “the inquirer selects individuals and sites for the study because they can purposefully inform an understanding of the research problem and central phenomenon in the study” (p. 125). Merriam (1998) stated that, “purposeful sampling is based on the assumption that the investigator wants to discover, understand,

and gain insight and therefore must select a sample from which the most can be learned” (p.61). Silverman (2000) said that, “purposeful sampling allows us to choose a case because it illustrates some feature or process in which we are interested” (p. 104). In this study I wanted to understand the role of the Japanese administrator in private secondary education. Participants were secondary administrators and who were willing to share their thoughts and experiences pertaining to their role as a Japanese secondary education administrator.

The participants were drawn from Senshu University Matsudo Junior and Senior High School, a private high school located in the Chiba Prefecture of Japan. This was a case study of five individuals consisting of the principal and four assistant principals. Initial consent was given through email (Appendix K) to conduct the interviews with the administrative team.

### **Qualitative Research**

As Hatch (2002) discussed, the first qualitative researchers were most likely anthropologists writing ethnographies describing primitive cultures. Similarly, sociologists around the turn of the century were exploring qualitative research methods. From there, qualitative approaches to social research have a rich history. Much criticism has come from contemporary scholars, however in that these early sociological works romanticized their subjects, therefore turning them into heroes and erroneously presenting the illusion that a solution to a social ill had been found (Hatch, 2002).

The period extending between the post-war years to the mid 1970s has been dubbed the modernist period. With the changes in historical methodology, qualitative

approaches changed. “It was during this period that qualitative methods were formalized, and scholars became much more self-conscious about their approaches” (Hatch, 2002, p. 3). This change, according to Hatch (2002), was done in an effort for increased validity, reliability, and generalizability and constructivist models of doing research.

According to Hatch (2002), the 1970s and early 80s saw a wide range of paradigms, methods, and strategies. It was also at this time that qualitative work began to gain more stature and legitimacy as a form of educational research, although not without some obstacles to legitimacy. Qualitative research, therefore, has undergone tremendous change within the recent past, culminating in one where multiple research designs and models exist within the structure. It might come as no surprise then, that qualitative research methodology has come under scrutiny (Silverman, 2000). “The great paradigm war between quantitative and qualitative scholars raged... during these and subsequent years...” (Hatch, 2002, p. 3). This paradigm war between quantitative and qualitative scholars has carried into the present context. It was only recently, according to Hatch (2002) and Merriam (1998), that there was a direct application of qualitative research in education settings.

### **Rationale for Using Qualitative Approach**

There are many reasons a qualitative approach was utilized for this study. Richards and Morse (2007) identified many main purposes for qualitative research. Those reasons, as they pertained to this study were; the purpose of understanding an area where

little was known, to make sense of complex situations... and changing and shifting phenomena, to learn from participants in a setting or a process the way they experience it... and how they interpret what they experience, to construct a theory or theoretical framework that reflects reality rather than your own perspective or prior research results, and to understand phenomena deeply and in detail.

It can be said that as qualitative research has and continues to encounter scholarly challenge, “topics that are amenable to qualitative inquiry have often been relatively ignored in the literature” (Richards & Morse, 2007, p. 40). This would seem to be the case for the study of the role of secondary school administration in Japan. Although research into the post-war Japanese education model has been reported, the subject of the principalship in Japan has only recently begun to be addressed. What this means therefore, is that there is a rather large gap in the research of the roles of secondary administrators in Japan in general.

Merriam (1998) stated that, “Qualitative researchers are interested in understanding the meaning people have constructed, that is, how they make sense of their world and the experiences they have in their world” (p. 6). A qualitative study seemed to fit this criterion, as this was a case study seeking to understand the roles of five Japanese secondary administrators, and how they perceive their roles and duties. Research was conducted in their school and home environments, depending on where they wanted to meet, to better understand their experiences.

Richards and Morse (2007) described a situation where researchers have a very practical goal for beginning a project or study. They explained that it usually was a situation “where the researcher can only guess... without an understanding of people’s



own accounts of their behavior” (p. 27). This study derived from a very practical goal of attempting to understand the Japanese education system, and more specifically the role of the private secondary administrator. As the researcher had a limited understanding of Japan or Japanese education, a qualitative study was crucial to construct a theory reflecting the reality of the role of the Japanese secondary administrator.

Reading historical chronology, although insightful in itself, falls short of presenting the wide range of experiences, perceptions, and personal stories. It is for this reason that qualitative researchers choose to interact with their subjects in an attempt to extract personal narratives for a better understanding of the topic. Qualitative research, according to Frosh (2007), offers a more holistic understanding of the subject. Merriam (1998) said, “qualitative research can reveal how all the parts work together to form a whole” (p. 6). Carefully conducted qualitative research, therefore, offers the possibility of exploring the multiple layers of any topic provided there are personal narratives available.

### **Case Study Approach**

I chose a case study design for the study. As defined by Merriam (1998), a qualitative case study is “an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a single entity, phenomenon, or social unit” (p. 34). Merriam (1998) further defined a case study by its special features - particularistic, descriptive, and heuristic. As Merriam (1998) stated, Particularistic means that case studies focus on a particular situation, phenomenon, or event. Descriptive means that the end product is a rich, “thick” description of the

phenomenon. And Heuristic means that the case studies illuminate the reader's understanding of the phenomenon. Creswell (2007) defined a case study as:

... a qualitative approach in which the investigator explores a bounded system (a case) or multiple bounded systems (cases) over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information... and reports a case description and case-based themes (p. 73).

Silverman (2000) stated that selecting a case was crucial, and when combined with proper sampling methods, could result in a thorough and analytically interesting research study. Silverman (2000) stated that data in qualitative studies is often derived from one or more cases that were likely selected for a specific reason, and not random. "Very often a case will be chosen simply because it allows access" (p. 102). For this study, the individual administrators at Senshu University Matsudo Junior and Senior High School defined the case. These administrators were each chosen specifically for their unique administrative experiences and duties within Japanese secondary administration. Gathering data from these five case studies allowed me to gather sufficient data to fulfill the requirements of qualitative research.

### **Data Collection**

As Maxwell (2005) stated, "the data in a qualitative study can be virtually anything seen, heard, or communicated to the researcher during the study" (p. 79).

Creswell (2007) explained that "a qualitative researcher has increasingly more choices

regarding data collection as we enter the online age, making the decision of the most appropriate data that much more important” (p. 119). Creswell (2007) identified basic types of data, specifically nonparticipant and participant observations, interviews ranging from closed to open-ended, and both private and public documents.

Silverman (2000) stated that data comes from three main areas: data already in the public sphere, other people’s data, and the researcher’s own data as it is gathered. In an effort to reduce the risk of systematic bias in this study, triangulation of data collection was employed by collecting information using the variety of methods and sources outlined by Creswell (2007), Maxwell (2005), and Silverman (2000). I made use of Creswell and Silverman’s collection criteria for the case study.

### *Observations*

As with all studies requiring face-to-face interviews, this study required access to the study participants. Information was gathered through formal interviews in participants’ homes or school. Observational notes were considered crucial for the study (Creswell, 2007; Silverman, 2000), and were conducted throughout the entire two-week period while the researcher was in Japan. Observational notes were taken during the formal interviews.

### *Interviews*

The primary means of data collection was through participant interviews. As Maxwell (2005) stated, “Your research questions formulate what you want to understand, your interview questions are what you ask people in order to gain that understanding” (p.

92). With this in mind, interview questions were designed to address each of the six research questions individually.

Following the levels of preparation as described by Hatch (2002), as well as the anticipated research timeline (Appendix D), the specific interviews that needed to be completed were decided. Based on the responses of the interviewee, probing and follow-up questions were created (Hatch, 2002; Merriam, 1998) to ensure that the interview was successful in covering the information pertinent to the study's primary and sub-questions (Appendix G) (Hatch, 2002).

The interviews were conducted one-on-one, face-to-face, and were recorded digitally. The interviews were conducted in a quiet location free from distractions (Creswell, 2007). The participants were interviewed in their homes or at Senshu Matsudo at a mutually agreed upon time.

At the start of the interviews, the interpreter and participants were presented with an Informed Consent Form (Appendix F) approved by the Institutional Review Board. Careful attention was paid to ensure that the setting of the interview did not influence the responses of the participants, thereby skewing any information or data in the study (Maxwell, 2005). The digital recordings were later transcribed and reviewed by the participants for accuracy (Appendix J). I also took supplemental notes to help organize thoughts (Creswell, 2007; Rubin & Rubin, 1995; Silverman, 2000).

### *Documents*

Historical documents provided an understanding of the Japanese educational history and structure. These sources included scholarly journals, books, and Monbusho's

website. Documents regarding Senshu University Matsudo Junior and Senior High School, the community, and Japanese culture and history were provided by the participants. These documents were included in the overall coding of data.

### *Participants*

Senshu University Matsudo Junior and Senior High School resides in the Chiba Prefecture of Japan, which is considered a suburb of Tokyo as it resides across Tokyo Bay. The school is a private school, and has approximately 1,000 students, and 100 staff. The administrative team consisted of five members – one head principal and four vice principals. All of the administrative team were males.

### **Data Analysis**

According to Maxwell (2005) and Creswell (2007), data analysis should begin immediately after finishing the first interview or observation, and continue as long as one is working on the research. Creswell (2007) stated that, “The process of data collection, data analysis, and report writing are not distinct steps in the process – they are interrelated and often go simultaneously in a research project” (p. 150). With the amount of interview and research material the study generated, methodical planning was completed at the onset of the study to ensure careful consideration of all of the source information. In doing this, I was able to code the information and group the information into categories that facilitated comparisons between topics in the same category, and that aided in the development of theoretical concepts (Maxwell, 2005).

Starting immediately after the first data collection, open coding was conducted to begin breaking down data into relevant pieces (Maxwell, 2005). Once data had been collected and the initial coding had begun, a secondary coding scheme was employed to re-assemble the data into larger, central categories (Creswell, 2007). With the data coded in this way, larger themes running throughout began to emerge (Appendix H).

In order to create a coherent design, a question matrix (Appendix C) (Maxwell, 2005) was designed listing the questions and identified how each of the method components would help attain the data to answer the questions. Once the data was collected, a careful critique of the information occurred to ensure that the information was correct and reliable. To ensure the reliability and validity of the information, and to make sure that it was generally free from bias, I triangulated the data sources (Merriam, 1998). Selection of appropriate participants was ensured by interviewing only administrators at Senshu Matsudo, the interviewees read through their transcripts to ensure accuracy - member checking (Creswell, 2007; Merriam, 1998), and participant comments were checked with researched information to corroborate different sources while also reviewing the interview notes to locate emergent themes (Creswell, 2007). I provided an analysis in Chapter Five that included detailed descriptions of the participants (Creswell, 2007).

### **Role of the Researcher**

Creswell (2007) stated that, "... what you bring to the research from your own background and identity has been treated as 'bias', something whose influence needs to

be eliminated from the design, rather than a valuable component of it” (p. 37). Due to the theory of reactivity where the researcher is considered part of the social world in which he or she studies, one must be mindful to foster research relationships that maintain a good working partnership. Maxwell (2005) argued that it was also important to consider, "... the types of relationships (and goals) that are ethically and politically appropriate depend on the particular context (including the participants' views)..." (p. 85). Diligent attention was therefore put forth to ensure that I maintained an appropriate and ethically motivated relationship with the participant to ensure that that bias was eliminated as much as possible, and intrusion into the participant's lives was minimal and caused no harm.

My professional experience was connected to the topic of study for this case study. I am an educator, and an administrator at Lincoln Southwest High School, which has a sister-school relationship with Senshu University Matsudo Junior and Senior High School in Japan. The school relationship and professional experiences had an effect on the interaction with the participants.

While preparing to represent Lincoln Southwest at Senshu Matsudo it became very clear to me that very little was known pertaining to Senshu Matsudo, Japanese education, or Japanese culture. This realization led me to attempt to better prepare for the experience. In conducting the research, much was discovered concerning the history of Japanese education, but little information was available about the role of the secondary administrator. This was troubling, since I would be interacting with their sister-school administrators.

This topic has become important to me. It has forced me to become reflective on their role within their own school, as well as reflect on the successes and challenges faced at their home school. Being aware of my personal experiences and bias has been important in the design of the study. I have been attentive to these biases when researching the literature pertaining to the topic, preparing the interview questions, and planning observation and other data that went into the final analysis.

### **Verification Procedures**

As Maxwell (2005) stated, “Although methods and procedures do not guarantee validity, they are nonetheless essential to the process of ruling out validity threats and increasing the credibility of your conclusions (p. 109). Maxwell (2005) identified a checklist of important strategies for overcoming validity issues. The strategies used in this study were: reflexivity, intensive long-term involvement, rich data, triangulation, and respondent validation.

#### *Reflexivity*

The researcher must acknowledge that they bring bias to the study. As Creswell (2007) pointed out, “the fact that the researcher is part of the world he or she studies – is a powerful and inescapable influence; what the informant says is always influenced by the interviewer and the interview situation” (p. 109). This reflection serves the researcher to better assess and analyze the data as it comes in, knowing that the data was influenced in this manner.



### *Intensive Long-Term Involvement*

Creswell (2007) stated that intensive, long-term involvement not only provides more complete data about specific events and situations, but the data are also “more direct and less dependent on inference. Repeated observations and interviews, as well as sustained presence of the researcher in the setting studied, can help to rule out spurious associations and premature theories” (p. 110). This study was conducted over a period of fourteen continuous days. I stayed at the home of the participants. This continuous contact gave me more time for “intense” long-term involvement.

### *Rich Data*

As Creswell (2005) explained, “both long-term involvement and intense interviews enable you to collect ‘rich’ data, data that are detailed and varied enough that they provide a full and revealing picture of what is going on” (p. 110). When it comes to observations, rich data are the product of “detailed, descriptive note taking... of the specific, concrete events that you observe” (p. 110).

### *Triangulation*

Triangulation, according to Creswell (2005), is the collection of information from multiple sources and settings, using a variety of methods, to create meaning (and validity). This study used interviews, interview observations, and primary and secondary documents to create meaning.

### *Respondent Validation (Member-Checking)*

Respondent validation, as Creswell (2005) stated, is soliciting feedback about data and conclusions from the participants. Creswell stated that, “this is the single most important way of ruling out the possibility of misinterpreting the meaning of what participants say and do and the perspective they have on what is going on...” (p. 111). For this study the transcripts were provided to the participants before the data was coded to ensure accuracy and meaning.

### **Ethical Considerations**

The sensitivity of the topic of the study might have led to ethical issues, in that I had to be mindful of the level of trust the participant gave them, and consequently the type of information revealed. Care was taken to ensure that their identity remained confidential in the chance that they did not want their supervisors, peers, or subordinates to know who contributed which information. In the interview responses and transcripts, as well as other data collected, participants were identified by pseudonym.

Proper consideration was taken in dealing with this population of participants due to their status within their school, primarily in obtaining informed consent (Appendix F), and issues of legal release (Hatch, 2002). These documents were approved by the Institutional Review Board prior to conducting the research. Proper consideration was also taken in deciding how to contact these individuals, when to meet with them, and where the interview(s) would take place. Due to the nature of the topic, as well as a subsequent geographical distance between the researcher and participants, the setting (place and time) of the interview(s) were determined by the participant so as to ensure that they were as comfortable and as free from any external coercion as possible.

**Assumptions and Summary**

The assumption in this study was that the Japanese educational leadership model for private secondary administrators would be fundamentally different from the American model – due in large part to different cultural norms. With the absence of literature dedicated to the role Japanese secondary administration, it was assumed that a qualitative research design based on case study interview methods of inquiry would not only be an acceptable approach, but would also serve to add to the literature base.

## CHAPTER 5

### The Findings

#### **Introduction**

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine school administrative leadership at Senshu University Matsudo Junior and Senior High School. Senshu Matsudo is a private English immersion high school located in the Chiba Prefecture of Japan – just across Tokyo Bay east of Tokyo. Senshu University Matsudo Junior and Senior High School is one of a growing number of private high schools in Japan with the mission of better preparing students for entrance into University. The scope of this study was limited to the private secondary administrators at Senshu Matsudo who chose to participate in this study. The central question to the study was, “What is the leadership role of the secondary administrator at Senshu University Matsudo Junior and Senior High School?” The following research questions helped guide this study:

- (a) What were the post-war changes implemented in Japanese secondary public and private education?,
- (b) What is the structure of Japanese secondary public and private education?,
- (c) What are the problems facing Japanese education?,
- (d) What role does the Japanese administrator play in Japanese secondary private education?,
- (e) How do Senshu University Matsudo Junior and Senior High School and its administrators represent the Japanese secondary private education system?

A total of five men shared their perceptions of their role as a secondary administrator, through their experiences at Senshu Matsudo. The one-on-one, in-person interviews consisted of questions that were derived from the research questions, and can be found in the Appendices (Appendix G). The analysis of the interviews, conducted over a span of two weeks, resulted in four themes related to the study participants' perceptions about their administrative leadership role in a Japanese secondary education model: Societal Demands on Education, A Slow to Respond System, The Do-All Principal, and A Promotion That's a Demotion.

This chapter includes a portrayal of each of the study participants, their individual case descriptions, a summary of the emergent themes and findings, and the researcher's reflexivity. Each case description includes a description of the participant's background and leadership experiences, as well as the four major emergent themes.

**Background and Leadership Experiences.** The various backgrounds and leadership experiences of the research participants are explored and presented in this section. The purpose was to inform the reader of each participant's general personal and educational background, as well as their leadership experiences.

**Societal Demands on Education.** This section focuses on the complexity of the changing societal demands on education, and consequently the role of the teachers and administrators. Data that were considered relevant to the societal demands on education were the historical research into the Japanese education model, the participant's

perceptions of the challenges and successes of the Japanese education model, and the participant's perceptions on their leadership role as defined by themselves and others.

**A Slow to Respond System.** This section focuses on the consequent lack of educational vision that has resulted from increased societal demands on education. Data that were considered relevant to the lack of educational vision were the historical research on the changes in the Japanese education model, the participant's views of major policy changes to Japanese education since becoming a teacher, the participant's view of major policy changes since becoming an administrator, and the participant's perceptions of their changing administrative role within the school and greater education model.

**The Do-All Principal.** This section focuses on the changing role of the secondary administrator within the Japanese education model. As societal pressures increase, the role of the secondary administrator continually changes to fill the needs of society. Data that were considered relevant to the do-all principal were the participant's views of major role changes to Japanese education since becoming a teacher, the participant's view of major role changes since becoming an administrator, what the participants view as their main duties as an administrator, and the participant's perceptions of their changing administrative role within the school and greater education model.

**A Promotion That's a Demotion.** This section focuses on the perceptions of the participants regarding their overall job duties as a Japanese secondary administrator. Data that were considered relevant to a promotion that's a demotion were historical research

into the Japanese education model, discussions with the participants, the participant's views of major role changes to Japanese education since becoming a teacher, the participant's view of major role changes since becoming an administrator, what the participants view as their main duties as an administrator, and the participant's perceptions of their changing administrative role within the school and greater education model.

### **Introduction of Participants**

Qualitative research allows one to study the case to understand rather than determine a specific outcome (Creswell, 2007). In order to become familiar with the case, a description of the research study participants must be included. Although there is an individual description at the beginning of each case, this section describes the participants in general, as a means of introducing the subsequent presentation of detailed findings.

For this study, I selected Senshu University Matsudo Junior and Senior High as a representation of the greater Japanese private education model. This selection was one of convenience, as I work at Senshu Matsudo's sister-school in Lincoln, Nebraska, Lincoln Southwest High School. After gathering permission from the Principal of Senshu University Matsudo Junior and Senior High School to conduct the study, I was granted permission to contact the four assistant principals.

Combined, all five of the administrators interviewed were Japanese males - ranging from 50-64 years of age. Aside from one of the participants who had only been in education since 2009, each of the assistant principals had been in education between 30-

36 years. A majority of their educational experience came in the form of teaching, as the number of administrative years of experience ranged from 3-5 years.

Pseudonyms were used in this study for the purpose of anonymity.



### **Participant 1 – Kenji**

***Background and Leadership Experiences.*** Kenji grew up in an educator household, as his father was a high school teacher. Because of this, he grew up with an appreciation for education and an increased respect for teachers. Despite the influence of his father as a teacher, Kenji's initial interest was not in teaching, but in research. Due to this early interest in educational research, Kenji found himself entering Hokkaido University – specializing in research and education. After attaining his degree he continued on at the university as a research assistant in the Department of Civil Engineering for three years.

For the next twenty-one years Kenji was a Research Assistant, Lecturer, and Associate Professor at the Department of Civil Engineering at Tomakomai National College of Technology. It was also during this time period that he was awarded the degree of Doctor of Engineering from Hokkaido University. Following a Fellowship at the University of South Wales, Kenji became a Professor in the Department of Civil Engineering at Hokkaido College Senshu University, where he stayed for fourteen years. During this time period he was the Dean of Students, Dean of Civil Engineering, and Vice President. In 2009 Kenji was contacted by the chairman of the educational board for Senshu Matsudo, and was hired as an administrator for the school.

***Societal Demands on Education.*** Kenji was very specific that any major policy changes within the larger educational structure stemmed from societal pressures, and not from any initiative from the Ministry of Education itself,

That was in general, a social change in Japan. The family structure changed as Japan changed as a whole, so has the younger generation.

When prompted about what had changed in the family structure he said,

It was actually people tended to become softer towards children, so that has carried on in that aspect.

The interview then turned to center on the very topic of a softer, more relaxed view of education. This softer more relaxed education, as it was discussed, was a response to the pressures of an intense cram-style, their terminology, of education where students were “crammed full” of the information they would need to succeed on the national tests. Students began to show signs of high anxiety and nervousness, and trouble behaviors began to manifest like bullying.

With a more relaxed model of education, scores on national tests began to fall, prompting a call for more accountability on the part of schools in regard to what schools are doing to prepare students for entrance to universities,

The way of teaching has become more and more polite. The way that the classes have run has also changed with this generation. We’ll cover this a little later on in a question about the education system later on. Another thing that has caused this change, out of every 2 students who graduated from high school, one student goes to university. Twenty years ago, 24.7%, 10 years ago, 38.2% and, now it is over 50%. The education system has adapted with that change.

Within the past 10 to 20 years families and students began to expect a more polite way of teaching and learning that produced the same high results that the former cram model produced.

According to the period across the generation, the nature of the children

has become different of course. With this generation, it has become necessary to teach kindly.

This pressure fell directly on the schools and teachers themselves, in the form of more insistent parents wanting increased accountability. Kenji used a term for this new dynamic of involved parent – helicopter parents.

Ultimately, Kenji stated that societal pressure created many of the problems facing Japanese education,

As Japanese society, economy changes and also as the children's outlook or their awareness changes, the system probably hasn't been keeping up with that.

***A Slow to Respond System.*** The change in societal views of education prompted changes within the education structure itself - Kenji was quick to point this correlation out. According to Kenji, major policy changes focused on restructuring to accommodate a society demanding a high level of performance, with a softer delivery mechanism.

This reactive over proactive approach however led to instability within the education model and schools themselves,

Every ten years or so there are changes in the educational system. From this year, there will be changes to the education system made, so not while I've been in. The high school system will be revamped as of the next school year.

When prompted to explain the time frame for reassessment further Kenji replied,

With that, there will be changes on a whole nation level from this system with

“breathing room” where that was the goal ten years ago... usually the textbooks and the content of the textbooks as well, especially this time.

The strength of this system is that it allows for routine top-down change but, as Kenji pointed out, the 10-year length between the assessment of goals leaves the system slow to respond to societal changes and shifts.

Although both private and public systems answer to the Ministry of Education and share the same common goals of preparing students for universities, they are organized differently – for different purposes,

Depending on whether they are public or private, the structures are different. Public schools are controlled by the boards of education. In public schools, the chairman of the board, the schools are changed in accordance with his way of thinking. So, there are two types depending on how the chairman of the board’s way of thinking, either top-down or bottom up, the way the structure is based within the school.

In regards to the Ministry of Education itself,

The relationship would be different between the board of education and whether it’s private or public.

This slow-to-respond assessment system is a direct contributor for the rise in popularity of the private school system in Japan. Where the public school system is beholden on the Ministry of Education for their curriculum and teacher placements, private schools have more leeway to adapt their curriculum and staff to the needs of society,

... therefore in the case of the public school and the board of education for public school controls where the teachers go as well. The public school principal is appointed by the board of education too. In the case of private school, you are able to get tenure, so there are teachers who are at private schools permanently. In the case of this school, we strive to be a little more democratic so it's not a top-down structure per-se.

Kenji highlighted the concern that, what has resulted in Japan is an educational system well intentioned, yet slow to respond to national and societal changes within the public school system. The private schools in Japan took up the charge of representing the shift in society's views on education, but only out of the ability to do so – as they are not bound to the rigid top-down curricular policies of the board of education. Because of the slow assessment system in place, only now are public schools in Japan shifting to the rigorous “cram” model of instruction combined with the individualized “relaxed” focus that private schools have been doing for about a decade,

This living power, power to live model, you could say, means that the academic ability of the students and the plentiful heart, plentiful mind, solid body. This Japanese motto of knowledge, virtue, and physical strength is the heart of it. These knowledge, virtue and physical strength, this is what they will gear the new system toward.

***The Do-All Principal.*** Kenji pointed out that because of all of the changes in society, and consequently education, principals are expected to do more as time goes on,

The main role that I envision is making a school suitable for the students,

also a school that has attention to detail. Those are the main points of my work here. Also, my role here, the vast majority of students here go to university, so my role is also to make a curriculum, make a place that accommodates the students in achieving that goal, achieving in entering the university of their choice.

Even though the goal of the education program, whether public or private, is to get the student ready to attend a university, there is also pressure about preparing those who are not able to attend a post-secondary school,

The children who can not achieve independent lives, that's a problem as well.

In regards to the role of the vice principal in education,

The vice principal is responsible for unifying all of the different sections of the school, keeping it all under control as a unit. Then, the principal oversees them and they work together as a team to. By doing that, the vice principal supports the principal in the overall scheme of things.

There are three vice principals at this school, one at the junior high school. The four vice principals have sections allotted to them which they oversee their particular part is done well.

Part of the overall oversight is hiring, and professional development of the staff. There is a difference in how public and private schools hire staff. In the case of public schools, the prefecture determines the staff,

Yes, in the case of the chief of prefecture, everyone must pass this exam, this prefecture; public teachers license. The successful applicants will

then be moved into the round of possible candidates for these jobs.

In the case of private schools, the staff is determined by the administration – both the principal and vice principals.

Once hiring is complete, there is staff retention and development to think about. This area, as Kenji pointed out, is in transition for private schools. Although the public schools have a system of staff development in place, private schools do not,

This is another difference between private and public schools. At public schools, there are standardized professional development courses available and they range throughout. In private schools, the professional development is implied; it's not formally enforced so to speak. That's one of the areas private education could improve in.

Kenji pointed out that, even in the public school system, there is not a consensus on what staff development should look like,

This evaluation system is not really in place in Japan, there's no fixed evaluation system.

With the changing shifts in society and education, a solidified program for staff development is slow in coming. What they do have is more of a general development of the individual teacher,

It's pretty difficult to put into words, but basically it's looking at the current capacity of the teachers where they can actually improve and have them display their best features in the school environment.

The job of what goes in to the staff development is an administrative team effort:

In this case, the principal would work with the vice principal in terms of

determining what type of professional development is necessary and deciding what needs to be done within the schools and what professionals or lecturers need to be brought in to facilitate that.

We have one evaluation system in place at this school; it's a class evaluations system. There is a student class evaluation that we do here. Also, it's talking to my vice principals and also judging the performance of other principals through them.

Yes, the vice principals do observe classes; they go around and evaluate teachers in that way.

Their role extends far beyond the curriculum however. In a society shifting toward private school specialization, administrators are feeling increasing pressure to "sell" and promote their school,

Also, of course, this point is particular to private schools rather than public schools; my job is to draw in as many students as possible at this school to make sure we get high attendance. To that purpose, it's also my job to create the image of the school being a sought after school where students want to enter.

Kenji went on to discuss what the recruitment portion of being an administrator would look like,

Yes, in a way. For example, I would give a speech, I would appeal to the people who would come to the open campuses or the information evenings, the information days we have at the school for potential students.



Kenji concluded his discussion about the role of the administrator by discussing what an effective Japanese school would look like, and consequently how the administration could help the schools move toward that goal,

Primarily it's being responsible that each individual teacher has the passion and ability to fully participate in the school and fully apply themselves to education. That would be a very important part of it. I think a good school; a fantastic school is one where the teachers are heartfelt. The teachers do their jobs whole heartedly so that's what I'm trying to accomplish.

Generally, just being whole hearted about it, doing the job whole heartedly. Being whole hearted in my dealings, my relationships with the teachers. It's a matter of the heart, so it's a very difficult thing to achieve.

***A Promotion That's A Demotion.*** Perhaps as a culmination of the previous themes, Kenji and other participants joked about the job of the administrator being, "a promotion that's a demotion." With so many perceived duties of the administrator, Kenji voiced his opinion that the individual does not seek the job of an administrator, but rather individuals are recruited from the staff,

The ones that are capable from the teaching staff. I look for, among the general teaching staff, confidence in being able to do administrative duties in vice principals.

When prompted to explain further, Kenji replied,

If there was a current vice principal that for some reason would opt to leave his position, I would then look at the general teacher staff and make a recommendation, give some advice to the chairman of the board who would then make the final decision. I would look among the general teacher staff.

Kenji explained that in Japanese society one does not seek advancement – rather they focus on the job they are in. Kenji, as well as other participants, stressed the importance of Confucian ethics in their society and its connection with leadership in education. Kenji stated that teachers in Japan do not aspire to higher positions, because their duty is to their role as a teacher. For this reason administration recruits from the pool of teachers.

Kenji stated that due to Confucian influence, administrators are not held in as high regard as teachers, so recruiting teachers to ascend to an administrative position is very difficult – oftentimes requiring multiple meetings to convince the teacher to become an administrator. This cultural dynamic, combined with the perceived immense responsibilities of an administrator in secondary education, has contributed to the idea that the promotion to administration is a demotion in many aspects.

## **Participant 2 – Takeshi**

***Background and Leadership Experiences.*** Takeshi grew up in an educator's household, as his father had worked in an elementary school. Unlike some of the other participants though, this initial early exposure to education did not immediately attract him to the profession.

My father used to work in an elementary school. So I thought I didn't want to be a teacher at first. But, one day my father helped children to get them relationships better after the children were fighting. Then, I thought, 'Oh, this job is very nice.'

This incident, as Takeshi explained, had an immense impact on him. He started to think about education as a profession from that point onward. After passing the exam and obtaining his teaching certification he was initially employed within a public school. Takeshi said that after a few years he was able to make the move to the private school model with a job at Senshu Matsudo. Takeshi has been at Senshu Matsudo since then. He has been in education now for thirty-six years – three of which are in administration.

***Societal Demands on Education.*** Takeshi was very direct in his assessment of the most pressing problem facing Japanese education. He stated that there had been a shift in student motivation. Although he attributes some of the reasons for this to educators not properly motivating students in the classroom, he also pointed out a larger societal issue,

The current main problem in my school is that students don't have motivation or challenging spirit. I think the teacher's role is that the teacher motivates students with passion but I think that now in whole

Japan, people feel there is not so bright future for it's very hard to do that.

According to Takeshi, the lack of a bright future in a well-paying job is causing the students to lose motivation. But then that loss in motivation in turn means that they are not preparing themselves to enter the work force, thereby establishing a self-defeating cycle. He said that this societal pressure will not easily be fixed on the larger national level, but will have to be addressed within the schools themselves. Teachers cannot impact the greater economy, but teacher's can do their part by energizing and motivating their students to be in a better position at graduation to enter the work force.

I think that the problem needs to be improved by individual efforts of teachers.

Like the other participants, Takeshi pointed out that the economic uncertainty over the years, combined with the old "cram" model of education, was causing problems for students and families in Japan.

Before 2005 a lot of the schools insisted on they study a lot, very hard.

After 2005, school didn't say much about studying very, very hard. Before 2005, I think you may know about Japanese economic model, we just study hard and work hard and get money. Very stressful and some educational people thought this kind of education is not good.

He pointed out that stress and pressure was not necessarily a bad thing, as that stress and pressure motivated students to do well.

***A Slow to Respond System.*** Takeshi, like some of the other study participants, pointed out the differences between the public and private school models of education. Although

both answer to the Ministry of Education and the Local Prefecture, private schools have more leeway in their curriculum, and therefore are more responsive to societal changes.

At first, the public school and private school is very different. My school is private school so it's different than the public school. The public school needs to follow very top-down policy from the country to the local policy. But, in my school, the private school doesn't need to follow. Of course, the very basic curriculum needs to follow Japanese education policy, but still my school can change it freely, more adjusted to my school's policy. So, next year the Japanese educational policy will be changed, so I hope I won't have to change my school's curriculum according with the new policy.

Takeshi also pointed out that the big change in educational policy has been recent,

It has changed very much. The big change happened around 7 years ago, Japanese education changed into more slowly down. Around 2005, before 2005 a lot of the schools insisted on they study a lot, very hard. After 2005, school didn't say much about studying very, very hard... Around 2005, Japanese Education changes are very big.

He pointed out that this change to a more relaxed system, as wanted by society, was another cause of poor student motivation – that the Ministry of Education was placing too much emphasis on societal pressures, and not enough on what is best for the students. The lack of responsiveness on the part of education to meet the needs of the students, according to Takeshi, was a direct cause in the decline of motivation.

Before 2005, children were forced to study by teachers and Japanese

education system. Then, I think that was, of course, how some negative but still the negative power was also good sometimes to motivate them to study.

Takeshi was clear about where he thought the system had erred – he thought that change had taken so long, and been so drastic as a result, that Japanese education had lost sight of what had been working,

I think the cramming system of education was successful in Japan.

***The Do-All Principal.*** Takeshi, like other participants, said he felt overwhelmed by the job of being an administrator. He explained that it wasn't necessarily because of all of the duties to perform, but rather the ambiguity of the system.

The Vice Principal doesn't have specific job details. I just know I need to assist the Principal so I always think about that in my actions.

In addition to assisting the principal, his main role,

...is to get opinions from the other teachers and to communicate with the principal and extend the opinions.

The pressure of doing well for the principal is compounded, as there is pressure to perform well for the staff,

As a vice principal, I sometimes need to advise the other teachers when they are wrong. At that time, some teachers might feel very bad if the Vice Principal is not a good person so I think I need to be a good person, I need to have a good personality otherwise they feel just bad and they don't get any advice from him. So, I think the personality is important.

Takeshi pointed out that this makes a good personality crucial for an administrative leader in the school – a person that is liked, can be honest, and is trusted by both the principal and staff.

The pressure to be liked by the staff is crucial to Takeshi, as he sees the administrator being someone who helps develop the good abilities of the staff – in part by cheering them up.

The teachers see students. The Vice Principal also sees the teachers and the Vice Principal cheers them up and tries to develop their good abilities. If the staff sees you as being a good person, the staff will be more open to your suggestions for areas of improvement.

Takeshi pointed out that staff development is problematic considering that the administrator is expected to advise teachers in professional growth, when there are no set criteria for what constitutes a good or bad teacher. From here he referenced back to the societal issues that put pressure on a slow-to-respond system, that then made slow, ill-planned changes. What has happened, according to Takeshi, is an ever-changing system that is making it difficult for teachers to know what to teach or how to teach it, and administrators not knowing what to assess. In this confusion then, it is the duty of the administrator to determine the benchmark as to what a good teacher looks like.

For teacher evaluations, at first I need to have some measurement. What's the ideal teacher? Otherwise I cannot evaluate the teacher. At first, I set what the ideal teacher is . . . One teacher might be a bad teacher, but still I think that bad teacher might have good points so I want to try to support him to improve his ability.

Ultimately, teaching, staff development, and communication culminate in a school where,  
 ...all the teachers share the same target and make efforts toward that  
 target; that's the idea.

***A Promotion That's A Demotion.*** Takeshi did not have any ambitions of becoming an administrator, as he always wanted to be a teacher,

No. I didn't' think about becoming a principal or assistant principal. I  
 always wanted to be a teacher who was trusted by teachers and students.

When asked how he had become an administrator, he replied that he had been recruited – he had been asked by the principal. There was no formal process other than internal recruitment.

Takeshi expanded on why he had never considered becoming an administrator. In addition to always wanting to teach, he had focused all his energies on being a good teacher. He theorized that this was the same for other administrators; the intrinsic pressure to be a good teacher carried over into the area of administration. This dynamic, as he pointed out, leads to administrators trying to do everything, and do it to the best of their ability every time. The external pressure from the staff, and the internal self pressure is one reason why he considered the position of administration a demotion – he was not doing what he loves - teaching, he was doing what he was asked to do out of sense of duty and wanting to do his best for the school.



### **Participant 3 – Yuzo**

***Background and Leadership Experiences.*** Yuzo's path to education was not as direct as some of the other study participants. After originally receiving a University degree in business, Yuzo had many experiences in the business sector.

After I graduated from University, I worked at a big supermarket company called "Daiei", quite big. I had a chance, through that job, to go to America and to do research and observation and I quite enjoyed my time and what I did there. So, Sears and Roebuck and ABC Mart are the companies and stores I had a chance to observe.

After a while though, Yuzo found that he was not satisfied with his career path. He said that there was plenty of opportunity for growth professionally, but he was not happy in the job. After a few years he quit his company job.

Yuzo explained his philosophy about trying out new professions, So, I decided I wanted to try out some different types of jobs, for three years and then I decided I would like to try teaching to see what it was like.

He said that education was the first profession to come to mind when he was attempting to think about what he would like to do. The transition was not as easy as he thought though,

When I decided I wanted to try teaching, I quit my job and took the test right away for education. I failed the test because I hadn't studied at all for it. I studied for one year straight then managed to pass the test I needed, very hard!

As it turns out, the three-year trial run worked out better than he thought. Once he passed the certification exam, his first teaching job came at Senshu Matsudo - where he found that he liked teaching.

This was, indeed, the first school, I came here first. I was only planning to try it out for three years at the beginning. He met students, they were great, I got a great reaction to them, three years grew to thirty years, I'm still here!

The three-year trial run has turned into a thirty-year career – twenty-six as a teacher, and four as an administrator. While he was a teacher he also began running the Japanese drumming club and the Taiko club – both positions he still holds even while taking on the duties of an administrator. Like some of the other administrators, Yuzo is still teaching as well. As for the future, he has found that he plans to be at Senshu Matsudo until he retires, as he is happy where he is.

So, I plan to be here until the end, then, maybe after I retire I might try something more relaxed as a retiree. For now, I'm very happy.

***Societal Demands on Education.*** As Yuzo is a history teacher, his responses were heavy on the historical progression of the Japanese education system. Yuzo explained that societal pressures could only be understood by looking at what has happened since World War II.

Since World War II the American General Headquarters (GHQ) was largely in charge of the education system. They were basically telling the Japanese people what to do. The more free system, before it was more

controlled and top-down, somewhat militarized as well. The more free style education system was the GHQ, the occupation forces, MacArthur decided to put that into place. Many ways, whole sale they were ordered to follow the American education system at that time.

This new “free” system was different from the system that had been in place leading up to the war.

Up until the end of WWII, it was based on loyalty to the Emperor and a very militarized education system. The old system was completely thrown away, lock, stock and barrel.

Yuzo pointed out that this drastic change was not necessarily a bad thing, given all of the other changes going on in the region.

But, of course, in many ways, that was a very good thing for Japan. That was around 1949, around then the governments all over Asia were changing. The biggest example was China with the communist revolution. The Korean War; the big conflict between North Korea and South Korea began. America was responsible for stopping many of those conflicts at that time. I surmise, if the American occupation had not been there, Japan may have been overwhelmed by the movements in Korea and China and maybe become much more communist.

This change helped keep Japan on a path of a western-style education system. With increasing intervention in Korea however, Yuzo pointed out that the United States started diverting its attention away from Japanese reforms.

But America eventually started letting its grip out a little bit and realized there were good things about the Japanese system... From that time, Japan, the government in itself was allowed to take more of a lead in government and education as America's interests. The textbooks became less of a free education system and more of what the Japanese government wanted. You should do this; things should be this way, more structure.

A little while later, Yuzo said there was a shift in focus for Japan, In 1960's Japan became much more focused on rehabilitating its economy and the education system was very much affected by this. The economic system and focus on building the economy and being focused on those kinds of things had a very, very strong effect and became the center point of the education system. They wanted to make strong workers for the Japanese economic system that is exactly what the education system was about. Making workers for the Japanese economic machine.

The system that was established paralleled the trade school system that developed in the United States. This system in transition was, in part, what led to the societal pressures Japan is facing.

There were many, many, many orders coming down from the Educational Ministry which is called 'Monbukagakusho' saying, 'you must do this,' 'You must do that' in order to get exactly what they wanted which was an economic power house in Japan. The emphasis on competition became a big part of the education system, beating your opponent and things like that. At the International school you have to educate too, it can't become

just about competition. That created a big gap and a lot of stress in the system. I think this is where a lot of problems started in the Japanese system...

Yuzo then went on to point out societal problems that arose.

...like bullying. Bullying is a big problem in Japan, students who can't . . .

I think it fostered that. Violence in schools rose, destroying school property, students who just opted out and stopped going to school at all.

Students who completely fell behind and couldn't get caught up. I believe the problems started to increase with that. Even after the oil shocks, which really hit Japan hard in the 1970's because Japan has no oil of its own. The education system and the orders from the Education Ministry did not change at all to adapt to these stresses.

According to Yuzo, these pressures were causing immense strain on the education system. The problem they identified was the competition that had arisen from the push to become a post-war economic leader.

They realized that something had to change, but it took a long time. It wasn't until around the mid-90's right around the time I came to Japan, they decided they needed to back off, they were pressuring students too much, they came up with what they call 'breathing space education.' A less pressure education system.

The solution to decrease the competitive culture that had taken over Japanese education was a more relaxed school system – both in theory and practice.

Yes, exactly and also, even more than that, more concrete things you can more easily see is Japan used to be six days a week everybody would come in on Saturday as well. That was phased out; they only come in five days a week. The textbooks became . . . a lot of content was taken out, believe me, you can see a big difference in thickness.

The result was a system with less pressure, but with other unintentional consequences.

But then, soon afterwards, only five years afterwards, around 2000, the OECD, Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, did a world-wide test of achievement and Japan scores had gone way down. Immediately, the new system was blamed, maybe rightly. We can't go with this 'yutori' – relaxed - system; there was a movement against it from 2008.

Parents, started to blame the more relaxed system of education, and started demanding accountability. In an age where more Japanese students were attending University, the fact that international test scores and rankings were falling began to worry parents.

The system, according to Yuzo, is one in transition. The societal demand to perform well like in the post-war system, and the demand to create a less stressful system tailored to the needs of individual students, is causing discussion about the future of Japanese education.

It took some time, but the Education Ministry, in 2008, started saying, 'We are going to change things.' They revamped the system, and now we are right in the middle of the change. They are going to find a happy

medium with more of a Western emphasis on free thinking and presentations and not just trying to cram information.

A lot of changes are being implemented as we speak. To some extent, of course, private schools have to follow that and it's the sudden change from the more yutori system to more content and they really feel like they're being pulled in different directions; they keep changing things on them, this way and that way. How are we going to implement this in our school and teach the kids well?

***A Slow to Respond System.*** Yuzo was very adamant that the top-down system of Japanese education was slow to change in response to societal pressures wanting high performance, without the subsequent performance pressures on students. The top-down structure did not adapt well.

The education system and the orders from the Education Ministry did not change at all to adapt to these stresses.

With so many things to consider, the magnitude of decisions the Ministry of Education is responsible for has served to slow it down.

In the public school there is much more of a top-down; they take orders directly. They are even told which textbooks to use. They are told exactly what they'll be teaching and where they will be teaching in a public school...

In the system of routine changes every ten years, the Ministry of Education recognized the fact that things needed to change, but was slow to respond.

They realized that something had to change, but it took a long time. It wasn't until around the mid-90's right around the time I came to Japan, they decided they needed to back off.

Yuzo explained that the private school system is a reflection of the societal pressures put on an education system that is too slow to respond. The rise in popularity of private schools is due in part to its ability to adapt to changes quicker – unbound by many of the Ministry of Education restrictions; private schools can better tailor their curriculum to the concerns of their community. Although public education is just now dealing with a medium between the “cram” and “relaxed” models, private schools are well ahead.

...not just having them cram information but having them think, use the information they're given more freely to get to a happy medium. We (Japan) are right in the middle; a lot of things are being implemented next year... not in a private school like this one. This school and other private schools can choose their own textbooks and what they will teach.

A good example of how Yuzo thinks that private schools better reflect the changing society was seen in his statements about Senshu Matsudo itself,

It's (Senshu Matsudo) known in the education system as a balance of sports as well as education. Many schools it seems one way or the other, we balance both really well. It's known for a lot of input from teachers, not 'hands off' teachers really being involved and concerned with students' futures.



***The Do-All Principal.*** Like the other participants, Yuzo explained that an administrator must effectively manage many aspects of the job simultaneously. As it was explained, Yuzo and other administrators are expected to continue teaching or sponsor clubs while fulfilling their administrative duties.

Right now, I am still very involved, I am a vice principal, but am quite busy with my regular classes, I enjoy them. I also run the Japanese drumming club, the Taiko club, I'm very satisfied with what I'm doing right now. I'm not planning on moving on to other educational positions.

Unlike some of the other participants though, Yuzo did not seem overwhelmed by the tasks that he was expected to perform. Instead, Yuzo had an air of calm as he explained what he saw as his main duties as an administrator.

...the Principal is supposed to be the head and the one who has the ideals and principles. I felt the principal was to put those into action and bring the best aspects of the teachers together.

I feel I have to balance, a conduit between the principal and the teaching staff. I have to smoothly put the main principles that the Principal wants into action and find a good balance.

Yuzo continued by saying this about what it takes to be a successful administrator, Passion, logic, and also luck- luck is definitely a factor, in any case and in my case. Just passion is not going to get you there. Of course, just logic and just luck aren't going to get you there. You need a combination of all three to do well. I don't necessarily think that I embody those completely, but I do my best.

Yuzo explained that he greatly admired the old system that Japan had. He said that the group-based education system fostered a desire to do well for the individual and the community. This group-based mentality is what he said administrators should have, and wanted to help continue at Senshu Matsudo as an administrator.

Japan was a totalitarian regime until the end of World War II. Some of the good things that Japan has taken from that is more of a group based education and group based running of the school. These are the good things they've taken, very regular school assemblies where the principal talks to them and by grade assemblies. In terms of smaller things they do, students stand up at the beginning of the class and bow to the teacher as one. Almost all Japanese schools, I would say 90%, have uniforms to get more of a group identity. So these are the kinds of good things that are working now. The bowing at the beginning.

As Yuzo explained it, this is a Confucian ideology put to administering that allows him to help guide the teachers to see how their role benefits students, but also allows him to see how he as an administrator fits into the larger picture. His job as an administrator, as he sees it, is to be there as a conduit between the teachers and principal, but also to accomplish whatever the principal wants done.

Yuzo said that although others might not be comfortable in such an undefined role, he was more than comfortable. In accepting the role of the administrator as one that does what the principal wants, he would be setting a good example for the staff and students. That example would be a good Confucian one.

So that kind of philosophy of putting what you learned into society for the

betterment of society is a big thing. Contributing members of society.

I feel like people's 'human rights' . . . between teachers, and between teachers and students, when I feel they are not respecting people in their actions, or in their teaching, or in the way they deal with other teachers, that's when I feel I have to come in and say something. Of course, there's going to be small mistakes, I realize I have to take the long view and not worry so much about small mistakes, to keep things running over the long haul.

Yuzo had little to say in regards to staff development and evaluations, but he did reiterate the Confucian goal of letting staff see the larger picture. When asked about the administrator's role in staff development and evaluations, Yuzo said,

I want to help teachers to have a very forward looking teaching environment, not just focusing on tests, an environment that really focuses on human relations.

Whenever there are human mistakes or areas where the teachers personally need to improve, I am the one who needs to focus them and say, 'You need to do this' or 'Stop doing that.'

***A Promotion That's A Demotion.*** Although Yuzo had a more positive understanding of the role of an administrator, he mentioned the saying that the job of an administrator was a promotion that's a demotion. When I asked him to explain, he said that it was often joked that administrators were not as respected as a teacher. This was due, as he

explained it, in large part to Confucian societal influences. Yuzo explained that teachers have a defined contributing role in society, whereas administrators do not.

Yuzo said that he valued Confucian ideologies very much, and because of that he was hard-pressed to let teaching go.

...it took a lot of convincing and lots of phone calls to get me on board with becoming the vice principal.

When asked to be an administrator however, he felt that it was his duty to return the favor to a school that had been so kind to him.

I was told there's no one else to do it. I had been here for 26 years and been taken care of and I wanted to return the favor.

Because he was so dedicated to doing his job as a teacher to the best of his ability, he had not thought about becoming an administrator. When asked, he rose to the challenge, hoping that someone else would take on the duties so that he may go back to teaching.

I didn't think about becoming one. At first I said I would do it for three years. But then, the new principal came and my job became more enjoyable and there wasn't a lot of officiousness, I liked the atmosphere after the new principal came. I decided to stick it out because I was enjoying it more. I thought if someone else could take over in three years they could have a different view of things, and more people could have a view of what it's like to run the school in general. But, I'm still here!

Much like teaching, Yuzo has found that he has duty to fulfill. His duty now is to help insure the proper working of the school – to Yuko that means getting the staff and students to buy into the school itself. Yuko recognized the fact that he was not afforded

as much respect now as an administrator that he was when he was exclusively a teacher, but that was a sacrifice he chose to make. This Confucian sacrifice for the betterment of the school reflects the mentality that Yuzo said makes Japan great.

There was the big 2011 Tsunami and earthquake in Japan and it was noticed, even in other countries, that there was a surprisingly small amount of panic, people were orderly in line and got their water and food. In many other countries there was panic. I think this has a lot to do with the Japanese education of group mentality and taking care of the group, wearing uniforms, and group identification. Some of those things are left over from Confucius style, and I think that had a big impact on the Japanese people's reaction.

**Participant 4 – Nobuki**

***Background and Leadership Experiences.*** Unlike some of the other participants, Nobuki did not come from an education family. It wasn't a parent, but rather influential teachers that served to inspire him to go into the field of education.

More than anything else, I love kids. All through my education, from elementary through university, I had many, many good teachers. I saw teachers and what they were doing, and I felt a real affinity for that.

Looking at them, I wanted to emulate those kinds of things. When I was a student, I liked teachers very much, that was the biggest influence.

Nobuki went through schooling knowing that he would go into education. Because his career path was more direct than the other participants, he is younger, though he has as many years of experience as the other administrators.

Nobuki has been in education for thirty-two years, and has the most years of experience in educational administration. Although he has only been an official administrator for four years, his administrative experience spans over a decade.

Until 1999 I was a high school teacher. Then I had 2 years preparation of founding a junior high school, my main role; in 2000 the junior high school started. I was acting vice principal for nine years, from 2000-2008. Even though I wasn't vice principal, I was acting vice principal. For four years, I have been officially vice principal.

***Societal Demands on Education.*** Because of his years of experience in education and as an administrator, Nobuki had many insightful observations into the changing societal demands on Japanese education. Like the other participants, he discussed the post-war changes to education, and what that meant for education. He also chose to go more in detail with the shift towards private education, as well as the benefits of the private school system that were serving to, with ever increasing numbers, see more and more Japanese families enrolling in private schools. Specifically mentioning the sister-school relationship between Senshu Matsudo and Lincoln Southwest, Nobuki pointed out a difference in resources and opportunities between the public and private education models as an example of this.

We're a private school and this is what we can do. We can have sister school relationships and send our students on trips, things you can't get in public schools. By and large, public schools don't have the resources to send their kids abroad.

So, they have to show them the . . . It was really interesting, they have to show them, 'Yes, these are the things we can offer you. This is how it's going to be different; it's going to be a worthwhile investment of your time and money.'

In addition to the benefit of greater resources available that will benefit students in their academic pursuits, Nobuki discussed that private schools are a reflection of the pressure Japanese society is placing on education as a path to a university. As he discussed, the pressure is singularly focused on attaining good grades so that their students can go on to a university and land a good job. As an example of this singular

grade-focus that parents said the “relaxed method” was lacking, Nobuki pointed out the difference between Japanese private schools and American private schools.

In Western countries, and maybe some in Japan, they are based on a religion or a certain denomination; Japanese schools don't have that as much. So, to show their uniqueness, their different focus, so they have more of the tenets that the school was founded on; Confucian style repaying your debt to society, and what was that word you said before? ‘Contributing to society.’ The mottos and slogans they have that's more what the philosophies are, as opposed to, ‘I'm going to give you a certain kind of religious education.’ They have to have that kind of...

Nobuki went on to discuss another societal pressure on the Japanese education system that the other participants did not discuss. As he pointed out, the shifting demographics of Japan were placing immense pressure on both the private and public school systems.

Japan's suffering from a problem of low birth rate but the number of schools is not going down. The only way schools can keep tuition coming is to . . . it's easier to get into a school too because there's more competition for less students; they're going to find a school they can get into.

As he explained, what have resulted are private schools increasingly competing for those students willing to pay for an education. To make conditions more complex Nobuki pointed out that, as part of the “relaxed” education reforms, Japan had turned to a free public education model. Although this system was good for those who could not afford



an education, he said that what was developing was a system of inequity in and between the public and private schools.

It's slowly creating a two level education system of schools that just need students and schools that have really difficult tests to get into their schools.

That two level system is also in universities and more and more the students are focused on getting into a certain university so this school and other private schools can sell themselves as, and it's their desire to help the students to keep focused on these upper tiered schools to prepare them for the tests they're going to take. That's what their parents are expecting when they put them into this school, to prepare for that.

These societal pressures, combined with other factors like a poor economy have served to place increasing pressure on Japanese education. What has suffered, according to Nobuki, are the students.

Recently the number of exchange students, or students who want to go abroad has gone down... There's a lot more Chinese and Korean students, but the number of Japanese students is going down, in Asia it's especially been noticed. I would really like this school to take the lead in helping to cultivate students who want to study abroad, who aren't scared to go abroad.

This decline is due to many factors.

There are economic reasons; Japan is a very stable country, since the war, I trust Japan, I know Japan, I don't want to go to something I don't know.

They've become more narrow. They're worried about whether they can get a job and they sometimes think if they go abroad, they'll be out of the system for too long and maybe can't get a good job. But, if they could think about all the programs outside Japan and get that experience, see how that could help them instead of hinder them. In the 80's and 90's there were students going abroad all the time; people going abroad. Since 2000 it has really gone down. I'm worried about . . . I'd like it to increase but I'm worried that it's going to continue.

The final societal pressure to emerge in discussions with Nobuki dealt with a generational societal shift, one that has seen the youth of Japan turn inward. This inward focus, as he pointed out, has resulted in less Japanese students expanding their understanding of the world.

I think Japanese are good people in general, but they can be very inward focused. In general, I wish Japan could foster an educational environment more outward looking that wants to go out and experience things. Japanese students, and people in general, but students could be more like people in Western countries, like what they've seen in American schools where people say what they think and make eye contact. If you take the most extreme examples, you have something called 'Hikikomori' in Japan where you have people in their teens and twenties who never leave their room. The parents even put the money under the door and the teens just in there on the Internet. That's the worst example of very inward looking, not doing anything with society.

He concluded the interview with this final thought about overcoming the pressures and challenges presented to the Japanese education model.

Of course I think that Japanese students are good, I don't want to talk about them too badly. But, I want to make Japan more appealing to foreign countries and make foreign countries more appealing for Japanese people. If you can make more people like that in education then you can get a country that thinks more globally about the environment and leadership; taking a strong role of leadership in the world. If our school can produce that kind of people, it's a high place to aim, but a generation that can do more than what we did, that can build on what we've done. We can only do our small part, but we're doing our best.

***A Slow to Respond System.*** Like other participants, Nobuki was quick to discuss the changes in education since he started teaching - in a negative manner; tending to focus on the problems that change had brought, and the subsequent slow response to the change. The result, as he pointed out, was a positive shift in prestige and enrollment numbers in Japanese private schools.

Originally, the idea of private schools was, public school is not just – there's also public schools that are quite hard to get into. Kids who could not get into them would get into private school, because the private school would let them in more easily. That was the image of private schools for a long time. That has gradually changed and schools have started adding junior highs and in some cases, elementary schools. Private schools have

started to be seen as an education, kind of from the beginning and not as a replacement for kids who could not get into public schools.

Consequently, this shift to private education has forced the private school model to change their focus.

It became more of an emphasis on where, of course more like in Western countries, where this is a place where you can get a better education because we have put in a lot of money and effort and time. Your money will be well spent, that kind of approach. Because, we now have more kids, not just the kids who couldn't get into public schools, but more kids who want, their parents want a good education, the environment in the schools has changed a lot to more kids focused more on getting a good education and parents more focused on getting a good education.

Because of its less rigid top-down structure, the private school system was able to change faster than the public model to better meet the demands of society.

...it still, to some extent has to follow the tenets that are set down by the board of education. Of course, within that, we have freedom to do more of what we think is necessary, more than public schools. Much more than public schools, we try to follow the policies set down by, envisioned by the chairman and the principal.

Two years ago, it was focused on treating everyone and educating everyone exactly the same and creating the same kind of ideal student. It changed from that emphasis, at this school as well, to a focus on the students and what area they want to go into, what subjects they are

interested in. There are now four groups, those who graduate from junior high school and go to high school here, there's the science course and literature course. The school followed the general trend in Japanese education in educating everyone exactly the same to having courses; a science course, a literary course, and just a course which have graduated just from our junior high school. In systems which have junior high school and high school together. Let's have more respect for individuality, is how it changed, that has become stronger and stronger, that philosophy.

Nobuki pointed out that despite the fact that the school system is slow to change, or perhaps because of that dynamic, Japanese education has in general done a good job of making education equal.

I think Japan has really done a good job, Japanese education system has done a good job of bringing all kids to the same level. Japan has a very, very low illiteracy rate. Even though the Japanese education system is quite complicated, compared to other countries they've managed to keep almost everybody at least to that basic level. I think that's a real success of the Japanese education system.

According to Nobuki, this slow responding system benefits the basic level students. Where the public school fails is with the higher-level students, and this is where the private school system is rising to fill the need.

It's also difficult to create a system where really stand out students can go on to achieve higher levels. That's another place where private schools can distinguish themselves by students who want to and can obtain a higher

academic level and achieve a higher level. That's a way private schools can distinguish because public schools are going to keep focusing on that base, they keep them all on a certain level. So, that's a way private schools can continue to distinguish.

***The Do-All Principal.*** Nobuki uttered similar sentiments to other participants when he said that his job is at times overwhelming, and ever changing to meet the needs of the parents and students. Because of the problems with the public school system, he said that he has seen his job change to incorporate more than just teacher management. Nobuki took a different path to the principalship, and as such is the case, has a different understanding of what the administrator in a Japanese school does.

Nobuki was employed at Senshu Matsudo before it had incorporated a middle school. Because of his leadership potential, he was asked to oversee many of the details to opening the middle school wing.

The process of starting the school, I felt that a lot of things were expected as me in a way that helped me to develop into the duties that I came to do.

I'm appreciative of the fact that made me ready to be a vice principal.

Now that I think about it, that's exactly right. Before, when we were just starting the school, I had no idea what a private junior high looked like, I had only seen public. I did a lot of research at that point, which was obviously, even now, useful for me.

Therefore, almost immediately from the start, Nobuki was confronted with the many aspects of the Japanese secondary administrator – both public and private.

We were told two years before, ‘We’re going to start a school.’ From 1998, when we knew they were going to make a new school, my class load was greatly reduced to six classes an day and I was told to go to different types of education seminars and to observe other private junior high schools and to go out, on research trips, to gather information for the new school. Of course, that ultimately became training for being a vice principal.

As other participants pointed out, he also reiterated that in addition to retaining teaching duties, he was required to attend conferences and incorporate management duties into his daily routine.

...to access the situations on the ground in this school and to bring out the best in the teachers. Also recruiting, for high school a lot of the students are coming from the junior high school automatically. But if the junior high school doesn’t get out there and advertise itself and show their good points, make pamphlets and everything else, nobody’s going to come.

That is a big part of my job as vice principal, more so than high school.

Nobuki said that he was prepared for many of the responsibility changes, but some surprised him. One aspect that he was not prepared for was the business side of administration, and the consequent interaction with parents because of the money inherent in the decision to attend a private school.

One thing I didn’t really think of at all is how much it would be trying to attract students and convince parents that we can provide things that the public school can; or things Senshu Matsudo can that public schools can’t.

I didn't realize how much that would be part of my job, or how important it would be. I did start to realize it in the process of going to other schools.

I really realized I had to go out and see what parents want and what they're expecting and to relay that to the teachers. You may not have realized the parents are expecting this and this, you need to change to adapt to more of what the parents are expecting.

Addressing the issues and demands of parents is a problem though, as Nobuki pointed out that there are many younger teachers entering the ranks. This is what makes his role so important, and that much more complex.

There are a lot more young teachers in the junior high school and a lot of them don't have kids so they don't often look from a perspective of a parent, the parent's point of view. So, I take opinions from parents and what the parents are expecting and I say, 'Look at it from the parents' perspective and how you're going to educate students.' I feel that's one of my jobs. Not just looking inwards and trying to make things better, but really keeping the word antenna tuned to society and bringing in various types of information and the ways things are being done to use them in school, very outward looking.

With so much to do in addressing the needs of the community and staff, Nobuki stated that the administrator needed to be the visible, positive leader. The abilities to lead through positive judgment and persuasion were identified by Nobuki as most important of the many abilities needed to be a Japanese secondary administrator.

Above all, leadership definitely. Because of the way public schools are



handled, with everyone being treated the same; private schools really have to focus on leadership and the teachers themselves. In the government right now, there's not a lot of leadership, the prime minister keeps changing all the time. That's something we need in education right now, and I look for another teacher who wants to emulate my style. Judgment and the ability to convince people of a certain way of thinking or doing things is a very important attribute, asset. Persuasive power, that's it.

Like the other participants, Nobuki pointed out that part of the challenges of being an administrator lies in the fact that there aren't any formal development courses for staff or administrators. This leads to an ambiguity that is left up to the administrators to decide. The rationale for this lies in the Japanese view of professional intentions, duties, and responsibilities. Like administrators, the staff is seen as professionals who want to do that job - and will do so to the best of their abilities.

This school is made up primarily of teachers who wanted to become teachers and that's why they become teachers. Not people who tried this, tried that, and then fell into teaching, or who took a job to make money. It's really stable in that respect. This school is full of teachers who really came here because they want to teach and they want students to enjoy their class.

They're going to lots of seminars and things on their own. We do a few seminars at school, but I think the best thing is that the teachers go out to different venues and they are representing their school...

Nobuki said that part of staff development was found in representing their school at

conferences. In knowing about their school enough to “sell” it to others, they were taking an active role in the school community, and in turn doing more for their ability to teach as they have a more vested role in the success of the school.

They can say, ‘This is what our schools has.’ We directly meet parents who say, ‘Do you have this? Can your provide this?’ So, they see very directly exactly what the parents want and that really is how they can develop themselves as teachers, this from real parents.

Because of this staff development piece, Nobuki is always thinking in terms of staff development as an extension of private school community outreach.

I am actively thinking about sending them out and I think they will learn from that experience in and of itself. Everybody is involved in the recruiting. Other schools they pick a certain number of people, ‘You’re in charge of these exhibitions.’ ‘You’re in charge of the research.’ I want them all involved; I send them all out to these exhibitions so they can get that kind of stimulation. As you’re out there explaining to people what it is your school can do, you, yourself will realize what it is your school needs to do. There’s other things that are important, reading books about education and going to seminars and things like that. But because we are a private school, that’s where we can distinguish ourselves by going out and talking to the parents. So, whenever you teach or explain you, you learn and study and see things in a new way.

Although beneficial to the staff in encouraging a vested interest in the school, Nobuki said that part of his job was to manage the friction that could emerge from a lot of

professionals passionate about a topic.

Because they are so passionate about schooling at the junior high, they can butt heads sometimes because they feel really strongly about how they do things. I'll have to say, 'This is good, but let's set it aside for now and focus on this.' I'm the one who's checking information from what other schools are doing, I'll say, 'Here's how they're doing it here, I understand you feel very strongly about this, but let's look at this part.' I try to combine those elements the best I can and take into account what the teachers really want to do because they are so passionate about teaching.

This outreach to parents is crucial for staff development according to Nobuki. But it is also crucial for the school, which makes it the responsibility of the administration. As previously discussed, with increased pressure to compete for fewer students, being able to "sell" their school to the community is crucial for the survival of the institution.

We're a private school and this is what we can do. We can have sister school relationships and send our students on trips, things you can't get in public schools... There is not much of a desire to go to a private elementary but if they were going to go into a private one, they're going to spend all this money; it's a lot more expensive, a lot more expensive. So, they have to show them the . . . It was really interesting, they have to show them, 'Yes, these are the things we can offer you. This is how it's going to be different; it's going to be a worthwhile investment of your time and money.'

In terms of teacher evaluations, Nobuki said that the vice principal was there to

help in assisting the principal. The principal would determine what teachers need to do based on informal observations, student evaluations, and vice principal recommendations.

...I feel I take what the principal says, his assessment of teachers, and take that into an active role. 'The principal thinks you need to do this.'

Realizing the principals' evaluations. Of course, if I think, 'This teacher, there's some problems here' or 'This teacher is doing this really well.'

Then I'll bring some things to the principal and we can talk about it and see what we need to do. It's more the principal giving me the evaluation and me doing what I have to do. I see myself as a bridge between the principal and teachers, the teachers and the students, and between parents and the school.

To this end, Nobuki thinks that the administrative team at Senshu Matsudo is doing well.

With so much to consider between parents, students, staff and administration, balance is crucial. A harmonious staff that is in agreement like at Senshu Matsudo, will result in a student population with less problems across the board – attendance, behavior, school ownership.

...well-known for having good relations inside the school; it's not famous for having problems, like a lot of other schools would. It's got a good relationship between the students and the teachers. It's a very good school to pass through. A lot of schools have a big problem, private or public, students are on the roster, but they never come for whatever reason because they feel bullied, or they can't keep up. But this school has a very low rate of truancy, students are coming to school. I'm proud of that.

They've got that part down, a healthy environment, so now we hope we can keep that and focus more on helping students get into higher level universities. There are some schools that are very focused on that; almost tilted too much that way. We want to keep that balance but also be as good as other schools.

What the role of the secondary administrator in Japanese education comes down to then, according to Nobuki, is creating a good relationship between all staff - teachers and administration.

***A Promotion That's A Demotion.*** Nobuki, like other participants, reflected in his interview, the societal Confucian views of fulfilling one's duty to the best of one's abilities. This focus on the duties at hand, according to him, does not lend well to looking past your position. As is the case, he did not have any plans to go in to administration, nor does he have plans past being an administrator.

Much like the other study participants, Nobuki also mentioned the phrase that "A promotion is a demotion" when talking about secondary administration. With so many duties of the secondary administrator, he pointed out that nobody would want the job. This, combined with less pay and societal stature, makes the position not desirable. He chose to take on the job because he was basically already doing the position. The principal told him that he was doing the job very well, and he would be needed in that position – so he decided to keep doing the job. When asked if he had plans for any future position in the educational structure he replied, "No I don't, I want to continue to fulfill my duties as a vice principal."

According to Nobuki, his path to administration was more of a gradual transition than the other administrators, but no more expected or planned.

How it happened for me, I loved teaching and I wasn't looking for that at all. I was chosen to start the new school and I gradually came into that role naturally. When it happened it just kind of happened like, 'Here I am,' the next step.

They asked me to do it because they thought I'd be a good person at it. It led to me taking over as vice principal. There was an interim, another gentleman who still works here, and I took over from him as vice principal.

### **Participant 5 – Hitoshi**

***Background and Leadership Experiences.*** Hitoshi found himself admiring his teachers while he was a student, which was a major influence in his decision to pursue a career in education.

I like my own teacher from my school that I respected; from elementary, junior high, and high school, I really like my teachers.

One teacher in particular shaped his decision. Hitoshi, the Sumo Coach at Senshu Matsudo, said that his own Sumo coach influenced him the most while he was a student. Hitoshi saw the respect that students gave the coach, and the respect the coach gave the students, and wanted to be like his teacher.

Hitoshi has been in education for thirty-four years – twenty-nine as a teacher and coach, and five as an administrator.

***Societal Demands on Education.*** Hitoshi talked often about the drop in Japanese student performance, and the pressure that the drop in performance has placed on Japanese education – specifically the “relaxed” system of education.

...the OECD, Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, did some research and they’re finding that Japanese students are starting to fall behind from what their original level was. So, I think there’s an ‘anti’ movement against the ‘pressure free’ movement system.

The result of this anti-movement against the “pressure free” system according to Hitoshi has been a swing back to the previous system – more of a cram-based education.

It was several years ago that my school did not have Saturday school; now

the Saturday school's back. There's a push to go back to the old ways, and I don't think in every sense.

The impetus for this change was not from the Ministry of Education, but rather society.

The push came from other places and then they went to the ministry of education and said, 'The students' level is falling.' There were pushes from outside whether that be teachers or parents of the students. And they, and maybe other politicians made a push to the ministry of education, and the ministry of education decided to implement some of that stuff to go back.

The falling student performance was not received well by a society that highly values education. Success for parents and the education system alike, according to Hitoshi, is entrance into a university. When asked why there was so much pressure placed on the system for performance, Hitoshi replied,

Part of that answer was how many students get into universities. The measure of success here is the number of students who get into universities, even in the past, they put a list or graph of how many of our student went to this university and how many went to that university. Out of personal opinion, some people might not consider that complete success, but it is; it determines their future. The university here, the name of the university, what university they want to go to does play an important factor in their success in life, more so, I would say, than in America.

The result of this relaxed style of education, according to Hitoshi, was seen in the



work ethic of the students. The relaxed system did not properly motivate students to do well, and therefore student performance scores have declined. He said that this is a problem larger than secondary school, as he sees the same lack of work ethic now at the university level.

The student work ethic and societal pressure to perform well are coming in to conflict, and causing subsequent pressure on the system.

A lot of the students don't study, especially in university. They really have a lot of pressure to get into the university; to pass that university test.

There's a center test is the big one, and a lot of universities have their own tests. There's a national test, kind of like our entrance test to get into the university, then there's usually an individual entrance test at the school.

So, everything's building up to getting into school, you've got your pressure in elementary, I'd say it even starts earlier than that; then junior high and high school.

The pressure of getting into the university of their choice sees students working to attain entrance, but not much past that according to Hitoshi. Where once students were motivated to work hard in school for themselves and their family, now students only do the minimum required to get in to a university.

Once they become university students, they've put in all that work and effort, then when they become university students, it's like, 'Ok, it's time to take a rest.' And they don't really do that much studying at university.

I've heard this myself, and I've heard this from a lot of university students. I went to a university with a lot of Japanese students in Portland,

Oregon and they said the same thing, ‘Japanese universities are much, much easier.’ They’ve made it there and it’s over. A lot of things are centered around getting into university, especially the exam, studying for the tests.

Although Hitoshi does not see students motivated to do as well as they could, societal and parental pressure remains high in their demand to account for poorer national performances. Hitoshi said that for right or wrong, society and parents are blaming the public school system. As the public school students started dropping in performance, society saw the private school system as a better means to university preparation. Parents saw the perceived failings of the public school system, and thought that the money charged was too much. This pressure was critical to reforming access to public education.

According to Hitoshi, public schools became free for all about “... three or four years ago.” This change in the public system also put pressure on the private school system. Although private schools were seeing the benefits of increased student enrollment numbers before this shift, after public education was made free private schools found themselves not only in competition with each other, but now a free option.

I think all over Japan there’s been a push to reduce the prices of private high school in Japan. There could be something more behind that. I don’t know.

Therefore, in an effort to meet the demands of society, Hitoshi said that private schools have had to reduce their prices, but also compete for “business.” What this looks like then is a private system that factors in individual student interests, but also incorporates some of the “cram” methods to prepare them for university entrance exams. Student motivation

is an ongoing problem that he said is up to each individual school to address.

***A Slow to Respond System.*** Hitoshi, like the other study participants, referenced back to a few “Delineated periods of big change, but not that many changes so a lot of... it’s been a lot more freedom in the education system, to have freedom.”

There was the old system years ago. It was a lot of lecture-based classes where the teacher is just telling the students information; they’re sitting there taking notes. Then, there was a system, ‘yutori’ which was the, ‘pressure free education system.’ It translates ‘yutori kuriku’ is translated as education with grievance base or system pressure free education. They tried to make a push for that so it wasn’t just teachers disseminating information to student. The students were more actively involved and they cut the school days down to five days a week. That system, in some of the other translation I did, that system started noticing that Japanese student’s ability was falling.

Although he acknowledged that more freedom was good, he said that the lack of more consistent change was not a good thing. Society was changing at a fast pace, and the public school system was not reflecting that. By the time the Ministry of Education looks at a problem according to Hitoshi, the problem has become magnified and more complex. He said this was due to the top-down approach.

...the private system has some leeway, I believe, to set their own policy and they don’t always, I don’t know the details of it, but there’s rules and there’s suggestions that come from the ministry of education. I believe the

public school system has to follow it a lot more than the private systems.

This slow-to-respond system has hurt Japanese students. Where the public model has failed the students, the private system has taken over.

So the private schools have taken the advance on going against that system and returning to some of the old ways, but a lot of the public schools are still on a five day school week. But, most likely they're going to be joining; they're just following behind the change to go "back". I don't know how far back they're going or what elements are left or will be left when the push is complete.

***The Do-All Principal.*** Like the other study participants, Hitoshi referenced the amount of intermediary work involved in administration of a Japanese school. When asked what personal attributes were needed for the principalship, Hitoshi was thoughtful and detailed in his reply.

I've thought about it a lot. To help people communicate and to listen, To listen to the problems and at the same time give a warning about some of the actions they take; suggest some of the actions they could take to solve problems. Communicating with other teachers. To help people to not have such a narrow view; to help them to be aware of all the things around them. To accept that there's other factors involved in the problem, too simply that, 'To open people's eyes.' With all of this information to be able to pick up . . . To be the vice principal, you have to listen to all of the information and pick out what's pertinent. What's important to the

problem.

According to Hitoshi, the administrator - specifically the vice principal - is the conduit between the principal and the staff. More than that, they are to provide guidance from their teaching experience. Additionally,

They all seem to have a lot of respect for the principal. The kind or has kindness for people that are below them. So the affective administrator would have respect and show kindness to those below them.

He was clear to point out that this was respect that was “earned.”

When asked about staff development, Hitoshi said that there was no formal staff development, but what was in place was, “...Communication, listening to problems, giving advice to the people below.” At Senshu Matsudo he said that there was no formal training sessions, but when he was in the public school system there were monthly meetings.

So, at our school they don't have it where they are actively involved in training them. When I was in public school there was a meeting every month, it's a teacher training meeting.

What Senshu Matsudo does, according to Hitoshi is more in line with what private schools do – they leave the professional development up to the teachers.

...teachers are required to go and get training every so many years. They usually go to a university. I hear some of the teachers talking about it, they go to like Chiba University and take a training course. That system might change, but they usually have to go for a week training course to renew their licenses and stuff.

There is a more solidified process for teacher evaluations than staff development. Overseeing this process, and helping the teachers improve falls within the duties of the administrator.

We have a big system here where the students evaluate teachers; I've read some stuff in the news about in America they're doing that too and some problems which have evolved with that. They do an evaluation on the teacher's here that's quite elaborate with graphs and all of these different questions.

The administrator does not personally evaluate the teachers below him formally, but rather through informal observations and the student evaluations the vice principal make recommendations to the principal. These student evaluations are only seen by the administration, and discussion is only within the ranks of the administrators.

This model of staff evaluations is one seen all over Japan, and appears to be a cultural dynamic. The idea of putting observations to paper might encourage others to look at the information and, in effect, start gossiping.

It's Japan wide, it's a cultural thing not to put it to paper as much, and I'd have to agree with that. It's not that it's not there; it's just not as obvious. Sometimes there are schools that do it, keep a record. They do take evaluation, but very rarely show them to the people... sometimes they'll do observations, but they won't necessarily show them they did it.

Without a paper trail, staff evaluations take a more informal discussion form.

In our country, 'you should be a little stronger in this, you should improve upon this, and this is your good points.' It doesn't seem that they show it

as much here, it's kept. They don't necessarily tell people, it could be a good or bad thing. Some people do want to know, what I can do to improve. They make suggestions; it's not, 'you did this and you need to do this better.' It's more like around the way suggestion, not so in your face.

To Hitoshi, all of the main duties of the administrator come down to a couple things – student performance and entrance into a university, and creating good citizens.

...meaning, our job is getting them into the university, how can we make them better citizens, better members of society, better people in general, how can education serve them more than getting them into the university of their choice. What can education do more for the student as a person? It's still really important that they get into university but they're still thinking about it.

As for how one knows if they are a successful administrator, Hitoshi's answer was clear and direct. He stated that a successful administrator has a successful school as seen in retention rates.

That's the simple answer. Retention rate of students can be considered a great success of the Japanese education system.

In this case, retention rates would indicate high achievement, student satisfaction, and teacher harmony.

***A Promotion That's A Demotion.*** Much like the other participants, Hitoshi was quick to point out that he had not pursued the administrative position, but rather had been recruited from above. He had always wanted to be a teacher, and his efforts had been

directed in that direction. When he was asked initially to be an administrator he declined. It wasn't until the chairman asked him that he said that he would take on the role. When asked why this was he replied,

Yeah, and then they are taken away from class teaching students, which a lot of people love to do, you're taken out of it. It's not really a promotion. There's still good points to being the vice principal. They still teach classes; some vice principals don't teach. We all teach about half of what we did before. It's a little bit different, some schools they don't teach any more.

Much like the other participants, Hitoshi did not have any plans for attaining a higher position. "No; no other plans."

When asked why he considered the position a demotion, he replied that there was a lot of work, combined with a lot of pressure, and removal from the classroom.

I thought before that the pressure came from above and I was to put it to the people down below in the chain of command. Now that I've been doing it for a while, the pressure comes from sides, the top and the bottom... and then they are taken away from class teaching students, which a lot of people love to do, you're taken out of it. It's not really a promotion.

He wanted to make it clear that there were good aspects to being an administrator, although his identification of the good parts alluded back to teaching.

There's still good points to being the vice principal. They still teach classes; some vice principals don't teach. We all teach about half of what



we did before. It's a little bit different, some schools they don't teach any more. Teaching and the responsibility of the vice principal.

### **Summary of Emergent Themes**

This research study focused on school leadership at Senshu University Matsudo Junior and Senior High School. Five administrators were interviewed from Senshu University Matsudo Junior and Senior High School during a period of two weeks regarding their perceptions of their administrative duties in a Japanese secondary school.

In completing the analysis of the data, responses from each of the five participants were first analyzed from the interview questions and sub questions. I conducted a preliminary exploratory analysis to obtain a general sense of the data (Creswell, 2008). In the tradition of case study analysis, I focused on topic coding to better interpret and categorize the data (Richards & Morse, 2007).

Following the initial topic coding, I sorted and aggregated the codes into categories. To help with this task, Wordle.net was used to identify emergent pattern words. Using Wordle.net-identified pattern words, combined with my own identified categories, I was able to identify patterns and themes. Once this was completed, the transcripts and field notes were reviewed to confirm the emergent themes, making sure the selected quotes and observations supported the identified themes.

On analysis of the transcripts, key words and phrases were identified as common threads through all of the interviews. These common words and phrases that were identified revealed the emerging initial themes. Once identified, these emergent themes revealed a deeper story from the study participants. In total, four themes were found in all of the transcript and field notes.

Overall, the interview and field note data identified the perceived and actual leadership roles of a secondary education Japanese administrator. The study participants

revealed commonalities in describing why they went in to education and subsequent administration, as well as their actual and perceived duties, and views on their position.

The participants were all males - as a reflection of gender trends in secondary administration of varying age (Japanese Ministry of Education, 2012), and leadership and professional experience. Each interview contained both positive and negative views on their profession.

### ***Societal Demands on Education.***

The study participants were all aware of the demands on the Japanese education system. When identifying the causes of societal pressures on the Japanese education system, the participants discussed the changes implemented in Japan after WWII. With the old militarized system gone, economics became a force of change within education. The system became one in which to prepare students for post-secondary opportunities that would propel them into better, higher-paying jobs in the business sector. “They wanted to make strong workers for the Japanese economic system that is exactly what the education system was about. Making workers for the Japanese economic machine.” (Yuzo) The stresses of this system saw a rise in classroom disruptions, student bullying, and suicide.

Before 2005, I think you may know about Japanese economic model, we just study hard and work hard and get money. Very stressful and some educational people thought this kind of education is not good. (Takeshi)

In response to the stresses exerted by this system, Yutori (relaxed education) reforms were implemented. According to the study participants, not everyone in Japan

saw this shift in policy as a good thing. Some saw Japanese students falling behind in their preparedness for post-secondary education and international standings.

...the OECD, Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, did some research and they're finding that Japanese students are starting to fall behind from what their original level was. So, I think there's an 'anti' movement against the 'pressure free' movement system. (Hitoshi)

Some in Japan demanded to go back to the old, "cram" model of education.

...There were pushes from outside whether that be teachers or parents of the students. And they, and maybe other politicians made a push to the ministry of education, and the ministry of education decided to implement some of that stuff to go back. (Hitoshi)

The study participants shared that throughout all of the societal changes and stresses, the Ministry of Education was slow to respond. "As Japanese society, economy changes and also as the children's outlook or their awareness changes, the system probably hasn't been keeping up with that." (Kenji)

Based on the interviews, the study participants all identified societal pressures that are impacting Japanese education and their professional duties. These identified causes of societal pressures were reinforced by the historical research.

### ***A Slow to Respond System.***

Each of the study participants identified the structure of the Japanese education system as slow to respond to societal changes. When discussing the reasons for the slow responses, the study participants pointed to the slow, methodical ten-year cycle of top-

down change from the Ministry of Education. As the study participants discussed, this is a problem considering,

In the public school there is much more of a top-down; they take orders directly.

They are even told which textbooks to use. They are told exactly what they'll be teaching and where they will be teaching in a public school... (Yuzo)

In addition to discussing the stresses of the slow system of change on education in general, the study participants also pointed out the impact on private schools. Although the basic curriculum of private schools needs to follow Japanese education policy, they can change and adapt to societal pressures more easily.

So the private schools have taken the advance on going against that system and returning to some of the old ways... But, most likely they're going to be joining; they're just following behind the change to go 'back'. (Hitoshi)

The increased flexibility of the private school system in Japan to adapt to societal demands has led to an increase in enrollment. This increase in enrollment numbers has served to put more pressure on private schools to meet the educational demands of more families.

Because, we (private) now have more kids... their parents want a good education, the environment in the schools has changed a lot to more kids focused more on getting a good education and parents more focused on getting a good education. (Nobuki)

Based on the interviews, all of the participants identified moments where the Japanese school system had moved too slowly in addressing societal demands. This dynamic of change every ten years was identified as a hindrance to the public school

system, and a reason for the growth of the private school system. These identified causes of a slow to respond system were reinforced by the study research.

***The Do-All Principal.***

All of the study participants discussed the amount of work and responsibility placed on them as administrators. When discussing the role of the administrator, the study participants expressed feeling overwhelmed with all that they were expected to do. According to the study participants, this was magnified because they did not feel they had a clear understanding of their job duties. “The Vice Principal doesn’t have specific job details. I just know I need to assist the Principal so I always think about that in my actions.” (Takeshi)

The study participants identified job responsibilities that included teaching, coaching, curriculum planning, preparing students to enter the university of their choice, communicating with teachers, assessing situations “on the ground,” and being a conduit between the staff and principal. In addition to these duties, the study participants identified an additional job duty of theirs - school recruiting. “Also, of course, this point is particular to private schools rather than public schools; my job is to draw in as many students as possible at this school to make sure we get high attendance.” (Kenji)

Further complicating their job duties, the study participants identified responsibilities stemming from issues of moral character – they needed to bring out the best in teachers, unify all of the different sections of the school, and be the leader with the principles and ideals others will look up to and follow.

...the Principal is supposed to be the head and the one who has the ideals and principles. I felt the principal was to put those into action and bring the best aspects of the teachers together. (Yuzo)

Based on the interviews, all of the participants described the secondary administrator in Japanese education as a position of immense responsibility where much was expected, but little was defined. The study participants felt overwhelmed with not only the curricular demands, but also the moral demands placed on them. These identified responsibilities of a do-all principal were reinforced by the study research.

### ***A Promotion That's a Demotion.***

The study participants all identified their position as less desirable than teaching - as a promotion that was a demotion. When discussing the reasons for the perception, the study participants identified factors like less pay, less societal stature, and less interactions with the students. "Yeah, and then they are taken away from class teaching students, which a lot of people love to do, you're taken out of it. It's not really a promotion." (Hitoshi)

The study participants also described the impact of Confucian roles and duties in their reasons for seeing the promotion as a demotion. "...teachers in Japan do not aspire to higher positions, because their duty is to their current role as a teacher." (Kenji) One study participant, Yuzo, stated that he was told there was no one else to do it. He had been at Senshu Matsudo for 26 years, and felt he needed to return the favor – that was his duty.

Because Japanese teachers do not generally aspire to the principalship, there is no formal path to administration in Japan. Rather than teachers seeking to become administrators, they are recruited. “The ones that are capable from the teaching staff. I look for, among the general teaching staff, confidence in being able to do administrative duties in vice principals.” (Kenji)

One study participant, Takeshi, stated that pressure to be a good teacher carried over into the area of administration. This dynamic, as he pointed out, leads to administrators trying to do everything, and do it to the best of their ability - every time. The study participants saw themselves as the bridge between the principal and teachers, the teachers and students, and parents and the school. They described the pressure from all sides,

I thought before that the pressure came from above and I was to put it to the people down below in the chain of command. Now that I’ve been doing it for a while, the pressure comes from all sides, the top and the bottom... (Hitoshi)

Based on the interviews, all of the participants described the job of the secondary administrator in Japanese education as a promotion that was a demotion – both in pay and societal prestige. The study participants felt overwhelmed with the pressure to do everything to the best of their ability, and for all of the stakeholders of the school – students, parents, teachers, and other administrators. These identified reasons for seeing the principalship as a demotion were reinforced by the study research.



## Researcher Reflexivity

According to Creswell (2008), being reflexive presents the researcher with the opportunity to analyze one's role or position in the research study. As a public school educator with an administrative degree, I was in a unique position to better comprehend the different dynamics of the teaching and administrative positions. But, as I had not served in an administrative role up to the point of this study, I was able to go into the study with few preconceived notions about what an administrative job would entail. Further, the fact that I was interviewing Japanese secondary administration served to eliminate any other preconceived notions about the position. Thus, although I have taken college-level leadership courses, I was able to go into the interviews with a clear and open mind - free of what I should be expecting in their answers, as I was in an inquisitive mode.

One area in which I was able to identify with the study participants, was in their shared understanding of the history of Japan. As a history educator I am well aware of the historical progression of Japan, specifically of Japanese history during and after the Meiji Restoration period, and through the second World War, into modern times. To be clear, this is a general historical understanding, and not specific to any one area like education. So, although I was able to better understand the historical influences and some of the influences of the emergent themes, I was removed enough from the specific topic to be able to distance myself from any specific answers.

The first theme, *Societal Demands on Education*, allowed the study participants the chance to look at the societal demands and pressures serving to shape their profession and Japanese education model. As this emergent theme was grounded in history, I felt

more at ease with the discussions, and was in a better position to see the progression and influences throughout. The shared understanding of general post-war changes in Japan led to in-depth discussions throughout the two weeks I was with the participants.

Although different participants noted different pressures, they were all clear that a changing society has served to place stresses on their jobs. These demands, as they all discussed, seemed to stem from the post-World War II changes in Japan. In formal interviews, the study participants noted that because of recent changes in the youth, one could look back on the education system that was implemented after World War II as a reason for the main increased societal demands.

They said that the “Western” style of education that U.S. forces installed was good – and needed, but was very different from the previous manner of education designed to instill compliance to the emperor and teach a trade. When the U.S. forces left, greater self-determination was given to the Japanese, and thus a blend of the new system and old system came about. The old system implemented education for all, and the idea that all students could attain a university degree. With it came increasing pressure on the education system to better prepare the students for university.

This new “cram” system as they described it, increased student scores nationally and internationally, and increased the percentage of Japanese students going on to post-secondary education. It also served to increase tension and stress, which in turn led to negative social behaviors in the youth; bullying, suicide, and anti-social behaviors were observed to be increasing. In response, society demanded an education system more responsive to individual student needs - the “cram” system was then replaced with a “relaxed” system.

Throughout all of this, Japanese education consisted predominately of a large public school system, and a few private schools that accommodated those students who were not able to keep up with the rigors of the cram system in public schools. To that end, the public and private schools were a two-tier system with the former being the more academically intensive.

What respondents noted as a consequence of the “relaxed” system was very interesting. As schools became more relaxed and tailored to individual learning styles, national and international test scores for Japanese students began to fall. In a society and family structure that demanded all students be ready for university admittance, this did not set well with the population. Society and parents began to blame the new system for failing the youth of Japan. Consequently, private schools began to increase their rigor by blending the old “cram” system with the new “relaxed” system. In turn, parents began enrolling their students into private schools; within the past decade the percentage of private schools in Japan has risen to around 29% (Ellington, 2005).

The second theme, *A Slow to Respond System*, seemed at once to be separate from the first, yet intricately linked at the same time. As the study participants discussed, the structure of the public school system is one with a stand-alone Ministry of Education that oversees all levels of the education model (Appendix B). This system was put in place after World War II as a means of overseeing a national curriculum for Japan. The study participants noted that it was the manner in which it was arranged however that was causing problems within the system, as well as with society. Societal demands were seeing the public education model change, but the education system as designed was not able to change fast enough to meet the demands of a changing society.

The study participants all noted the system review model in Japanese public education. In this system, the Ministry of Education would review national curricular aims every ten years. From there, the ministry would make recommendations and change areas of need. To further complicate the process, these changes would have to funnel down through the many layers of the education system before being implemented within the local school systems. As was seen in the first emergent theme, if developments in test scores are noted before the ten-year reevaluation cycle is due to commence, society will start demanding changes that the system is not designed to handle, at least not until the reevaluation period comes up.

This dynamic of the Ministry of Education, as the participants stated, has been beneficial to the private school system in Japan. As it was described by the study participants, Japanese families are demanding changes within the public school system that cannot be immediately changed. Because of this, families are embracing the private school system that has more leeway to change and adapt to the changing demands of society. Although the public school system is hindered by the ten-year cycle and all of the education bureaucracy, the private school system is not.

The study participants all noted that although they have to ultimately answer to the Ministry of Education in their larger curricular goals, how they go about accomplishing those goals is up to them. So when parents are demanding a return to the “cram” system, they can more easily modify their curriculum to reinsert dynamics of that model – whereas the public schools must wait for that top-down change to come.

Unlike the first two themes, the third theme, *The Do-All Principal*, was not as easily understood. Although I was able to understand the societal pressures and

subsequent systematic response to said pressures through the lense of historical knowledge, I was not as knowledgeable of the daily operations of secondary education administration – especially considering this study was dealing with Japanese secondary education administration.

As all of the study participants explained, their job as secondary administrators was very stressful, and very complex. As one participant said, pressure comes from the top and bottom, as well as from both sides. I got the understanding that in the Japanese model, there was a business model to the duties of the principal – that being in regards to management.

The principal, as many of the study participants discussed, oversees the vice principals, and directs them on which duties they will be undertaking at any given time. Although vice principals have set duties like staff evaluation, these roles are undefined and constantly changing. All of the study participants pointed out that, while it would seem that they do not have a lot to do, their job was made more difficult in the ambiguity of their position. Although they are told to handle staff evaluations and staff development, with no clear system in place to evaluate and train, it becomes more difficult.

As the participants also discussed, in addition to the ambiguity of their roles, some also serve in their former duties as educators. So while they are teaching and sponsoring clubs, they are also expected to be the conduit of information between the staff and principal. This was, as they discussed, very hard to manage. The pressure of this dual role sought to have these administrators overseeing and determining things for, in most cases, their professional peers.

Some of the participants went on to point out that the two roles of being a teacher and administrator could not coexist together; that they either needed to be a teacher or an administrator. The lines between the two roles should be more clearly defined, as it would help teachers understand the function of the administrators, and it would help the administrators better deal with their role as peace-keepers and evaluators.

The study participants all had the same understanding of their leadership role within their administrative position. As indicated in the formal interviews, the study participants saw their leadership role as mediators between the staff, as well as between the staff and principal. To this end, they felt that they were not there to dictate, but to provide unbiased and impartial analysis of the situation. Their role was to provide advice and offer up solutions to ensure the harmonious operations of the school. They did note that, if they were required to enforce a mandate, that mandate would be from the principal.

Because of the ambiguity of the job, the dual role(s) of the administrator in the Japanese education system, the pay, and the societal perception of the job, every study participant stated the same thing - that the job of the secondary administrator in Japanese education is *A Promotion That's a Demotion*. It would seem that all of the other themes contribute to the final theme of the job being a promotion that's a demotion.

The study participants kept coming back to their duty within the structure, and a couple identified that as a product of Confucian values that are clashing with an increasingly western societal model. As some participants noted, society has always held that teaching is a very noble profession. Its goals of helping others place it very high on the Confucian values system. In contrast, administration is not seen in as high regard, as

the function of the position is not one of direct student help. Therefore, as the participants put it, they had never thought of becoming an administrator because society and their early experiences had prepared them to teach.

Once in their chosen profession of teaching, the continued Confucian influence saw the study participants doing their job to the best of their abilities. They were focused on their role as a teacher, and consequently they did not entertain any thoughts or ambitions of moving in to the area of administration. All of the study participants, in fact, stated that they had initially resisted the offer to become an administrator – some going so far as to decline the position multiple times. As they saw it, their duty and calling was to teaching – that was their role to fulfill.

Because administrators were not held in as much esteem as teachers in the Confucian model, some theorized that this was reflected in the salary that they received as administrators. All of the study participants indicated that they took a pay cut when accepting the role of administrator. The formal interview questions did not ask their specific salaries, so not much more of this topic surfaced.

Ultimately, the study participants saw the need for their leadership role, but saw the job as a demotion for many reasons. Each study participant displayed some continued desire to teach. Although some of the participants did not continue teaching or coaching, many of them retained some of their previous duties and interactions with the students.

## **Summary**

This chapter provided an overview of the the study results. In utilizing the case study tradition of research inquiry, Chapter Five revealed the duties and preceptions of

leadership within the Japanese secondary education system. This was accomplished by interviewing and interacting with five Japanese secondary administrators at Senshu University Matsudo Junior and Senior High. The individual cases were presented, and the coding and data collection procedures were described. Research themes emerged, were presented, and consequently discussed through the lense of researcher reflexivity.



## CHAPTER 6

### Conclusions and Recommendations

#### **Introduction**

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine school administrative leadership at Senshu University Matsudo Junior and Senior High School. The aim was to speak directly with Japanese secondary administrators serving in their administrative duties to get a better understanding of the duties and perceptions of the role of Japanese education administration at Senshu Matsudo.

#### **Conclusions**

The conclusions are presented using the research questions as a means of understanding the larger role of the secondary administrator in Japanese secondary education.

*What were the post-war changes implemented in Japanese secondary public and private education?*

The research participants described many post-war changes implemented in Japanese secondary education. Each of these post-war changes had implications on the education structure, and were intricately related to each other. Following the “western” model introduced by the United States after World War II, the Japanese combined the

new all-inclusive model with the more traditional uniformity model. This “cram” system brought successes, but also stresses of increasing problematic student behaviors.

In response to the stresses, the Japanese model adopted a more “relaxed” system. This new, relaxed model brought successes, and also stresses of decreased student performance. The Japanese education model is in transition to reflect both the cram and relaxed models. All of these systematic changes have served to see a shift in perceptions and functions of the public and private school systems.

*What is the structure of Japanese secondary public and private education?*

The Japanese school structure is a top-down model in Japanese secondary education. The Ministry of Education (MEXT) oversees all levels of the public education system. The tiered education system in Japan has the Ministry of Education at the top, followed by the Board of Education at the Prefecture level, a Board of Education at the Local level, and finally the Administration at the School level. In the private education system, the Ministry of Education sets the curricular goals for the schools, but from there Local Boards working in conjunction with the School Administration set the individual school curriculum.

*What are the problems facing Japanese education?*

Japan has many problems facing their secondary education system. In light of recent decreases in national and international performance scores, the Japanese education system is left trying to define itself. Are they going to move toward an “all-inclusive”, “relaxed” western model, or a more strict “everyone learns the same”, traditional “cram”

model? If the private school system is any indication, the public school system in Japan will try to blend both models into one, where the school system tailors instruction to meet the needs of individual students, while maintaining a rigor needed to prepare students to perform well on national and international benchmarks, as well as enroll in universities.

*How do Senshu University Matsudo Junior and Senior High School and its administrators represent the Japanese secondary private education system?*

Senshu Matsudo represents the growing popularity of the private school system seen in Japan. With the perceived problems of the public school system to prepare students for university entrance, private schools in Japan have seen an overall growing percentage in the education model. As came out in the interviews, Senshu Matsudo has the balance between the “cram” and “relaxed” models of education that the Japanese education model as a whole is moving toward.

Consequently, the administration of Senshu Matsudo reflects the role of the Japanese secondary administrator in flux. Caught between changing societal norms and pressures, and an inflexible public school model, Senshu Matsudo reflects the increasingly preferred option of families in Japan.

*What are the demographics of Senshu University Matsudo Junior and Senior High School?*

Senshu University Matsudo Junior and Senior High School, located in the Chiba Prefecture of Japan, has a population of approximately 1,500 students. It is the main

private school in the city of Matsudo, with a population of 481,574. Located just across Tokyo Bay from Tokyo, Senshu Matsudo has an urban population.

As Senshu Matsudo is an English immersion school, the focus of studies for these students is English and international issues. This focus is to prepare them for Senshu University and its international focus. Senshu Matsudo has both male and female students, as well as male and female teachers. Like the trend in Japan (Huang, Y., Yang, C. & Wu, H. 2012) (Japanese Ministry of Education), Senshu Matsudo has an all-male administrative team overseeing daily operations.

*What role does the Japanese administrator play in Japanese secondary private education?*

The role of the Japanese administrator in Japanese secondary education is one of being a positive role model and mediator to the teachers, a conduit of information and needs between the staff and the principal, and an enforcer of duties as determined by the principal. The administrator, either from expectations from superiors or culturally, maintains connections with teaching and coaching duties and responsibilities. These many facets to the role of the secondary education administrator serve to make the job challenging, and less desirable than teaching.

## **Recommendations**

With so limited literature on the subject of the role of the secondary administrator in Japanese secondary education, this was an interesting study with many surprising and unforeseen responses. The study participants were all willing to cooperate in an effort to

help me to better understand their culture in general, and how their job fit into that larger construct. As their stories unfolded, their perceptions of an educational model caught in the middle of many opposing forces came into clearer picture.

As the changes in the Japanese education model have been rather recent, there has been limited research conducted on specific educational changes, or the subsequent reasons for the changes. The literature reveals a lack of information on the topic, and consequently a lack of understanding of the topic - both from an outsider's perspective or an internal Japanese perspective. Where there has been moderate research conducted about the Japanese education model, there has been much less research concerning the role of the Japanese administrator within the education system.

This research differed therefore in its scope; in just focusing on the role of administrators, a better picture of the education model has emerged. It is important however to recognize that some of the emergent themes in this study were also impacted by influences outside the context of the study, as other societal forces were at play in shaping educational theory in Japan.

The Insights gained from this study will help increase an overall understanding of both the Japanese education model, as well as the role of the secondary administrator in Japanese private education. Further, with the increased scrutiny of national and international student performance, this research will provide a better understanding of the complexity of the cross-culture and cross-nation comparisons.

Based on the participants' responses, Japan is evolving in response to national and international pressures. The education system is in turn evolving in response to these pressures - to better prepare students to meet the challenges these pressures pose. This

study provides compelling evidence to educational researchers that Japan's educational model will be one to watch. As they are blending western and eastern models, their approach might be one adopted by other countries in the region.

This research study will also benefit other nations looking to compare school performance. As a true comparison can only happen when one understands both sides, this study does help to fill in the gap in literature regarding the Japanese education model. By providing a look into the overall administrative structure and perceived duties of the Japanese private secondary administrator, one can better understand the rationale and operations of Japanese secondary schools.

***Limitations.*** Due to the nature of the study, and my position, this study was limited from the beginning. Senshu Matsudo was selected as a representation of the Japanese education model out of convenience – I am an employee of the sister-school partnership of Senshu Matsudo and Lincoln Southwest High School in Lincoln, Nebraska. Due to this sister-school relationship, I was mindful of the dual role served while visiting the school; I was both a researcher into the topic of private secondary Japanese administration, and an official representative of the sister-school relationship.

As Senshu Matsudo was selected as the sole representation of the Japanese school system, there were few administrators to interview. There is one principal, four vice principals, and one coordinator at Senshu Matsudo – because of this the pool of study participants was limited. Further limiting the study, only the principal and four vice principals agreed to participate in the study.

Another limitation to the study was the status of Senshu Matsudo as a private school. This being the case, I was only exposed to the daily operations of one private school, and the study participants consequently only reflected the perspective of the private school system.

Although the small number of study participants allowed for a more in-depth exploration critical to the purpose of the study, the small numbers of participants at one private school were limitations to the study.

***Implications of Future Research.*** The qualitative method of inquiry allows the researcher to go more in-depth with a research topic, by understanding more richly the perspectives and meanings participants attribute to their life experiences (Creswell, 2007). The challenge in this lies with the researcher; with so much information gathered, the researcher is tasked with deciding which information is pertinent to the study, and which must be set aside for future study. Based on this study, opportunities for further research are recommended.

Although the study used Senshu Matsudo as a representative of Japanese private secondary education, research incorporating more private school administrators would enrich the understanding of the role of the Japanese secondary administrator. A greater pool of study participants would provide a more thorough look at the entirety of Japanese education, and thus a more thorough look at the position of administrator within the Japanese education system in general.

As this research revealed, it appears that the public school system is in the process of changing their model to more accurately reflect what the private schools have already

done in creating a curriculum that blends both the “cram” and “relaxed” educational models. At the time of the research however, changes were still one year away. Thus, any changes were rumor and speculation on the part of the study participants.

The shift of public perception about the job of the Japanese education system, and consequent pressures placed on education has seen many changes within the structure, curriculum, and duties of both teachers and administrators. Future studies conducted after the policy implementations will more accurately reflect the direction of Japanese education and its ability to change with societal demands.

A final area of future research from this study would be in the area of gender issues – specifically in the number of females in the field of education and educational administration in Japan. This study was limited to male administrators, as Senshu Matsudo only had an all-male administrative team. In its 2008 multi-national report on the “unique gender divide among school principals and teachers”, titled *Improving School Leadership: Volume 1 Policy and Practice* in 2008, the OECD reported that as of 2007, the ratio of female principals in Japan was very low when compared to male principals. The ratio of female principals in elementary schools was 17.9%, and the number of female principals in secondary education was even lower than that at less than 5% (Huang, Y., Yang, C., & Wu, H., 2012; Japanese Ministry of Education, 2012). Although the number of female administrators remains low in Japan, future research into the perspective of female administrator would further add to the collective literature and understanding of the topic of this study.



## **Summary**

Four themes emerged in this study: Societal Demands on Education, A Slow to Respond System, The Do-All Principal, and A Promotion That's a Demotion. Limitations to this study emerged and were analyzed, leading to areas of future research within the topic of study. The most important discovery made was the complexity of stresses placed on the Japanese secondary administrator. A society in transition, coupled with an education system slow to respond to the pressures these transitions have created, has led to increasing pressure on both the education system itself – as well as the teachers and administration within the system. With so many outside pressures determining the role of the secondary administrator in Japanese education, their role has yet to be defined. If the Ministry of Education establishes a formal process to the principalship, and better defines the role of the Japanese secondary administrator, then it will serve to lessen the pressures faced in the position.

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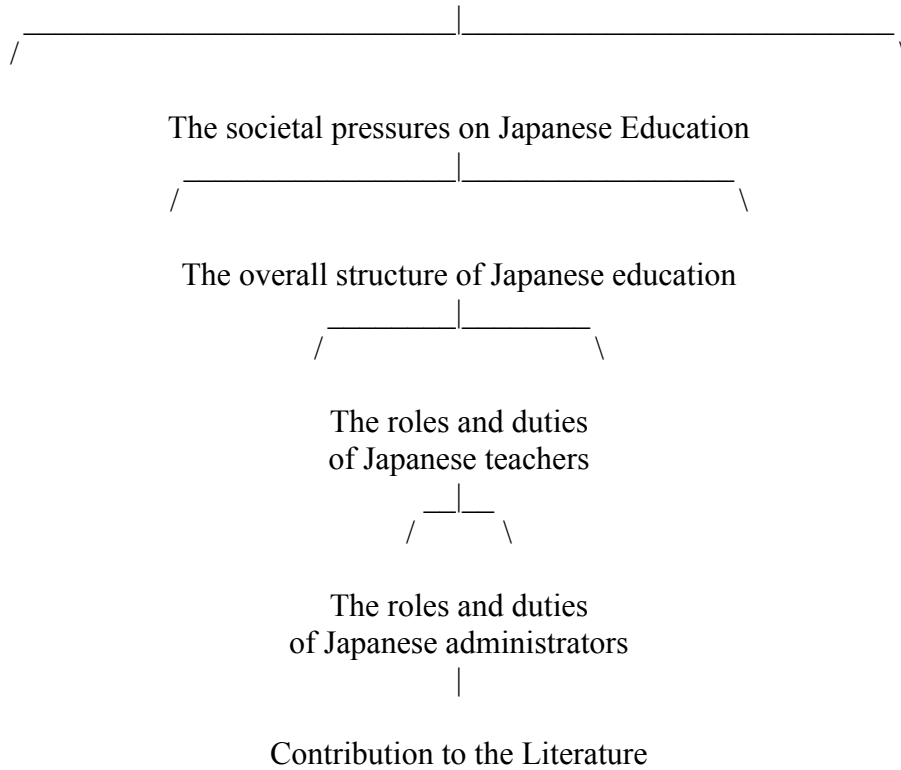
## **Appendix A**

### **Literature Map**



**Literature Map**

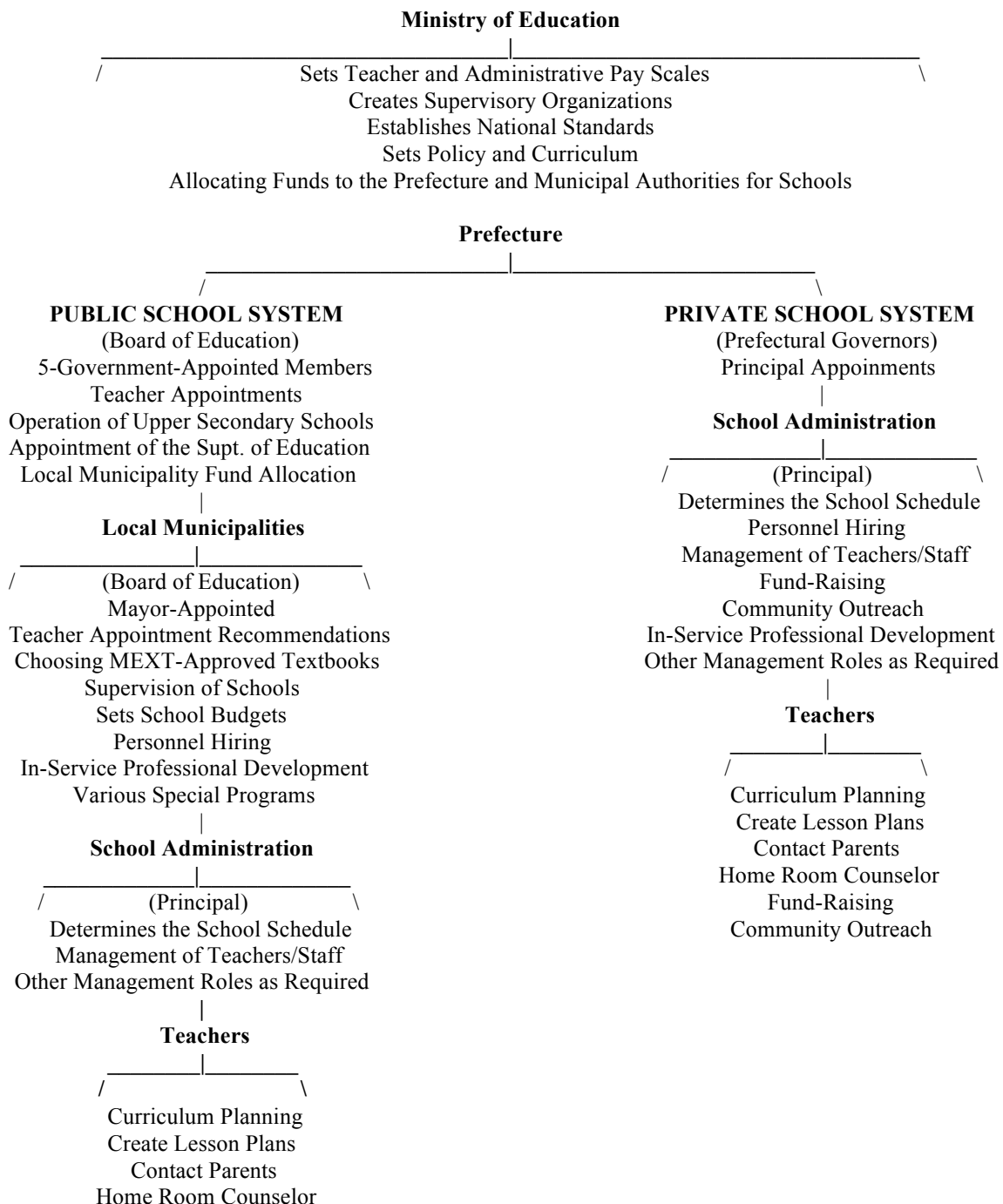
Reforms within Japanese education since World War II



## **Appendix B**

### **Japanese Education Structure**

## Japanese Education Structure



Source: Researcher-Compiled From Literature

## **Appendix C**

### **Interview Question Matrix**

### Question Matrix

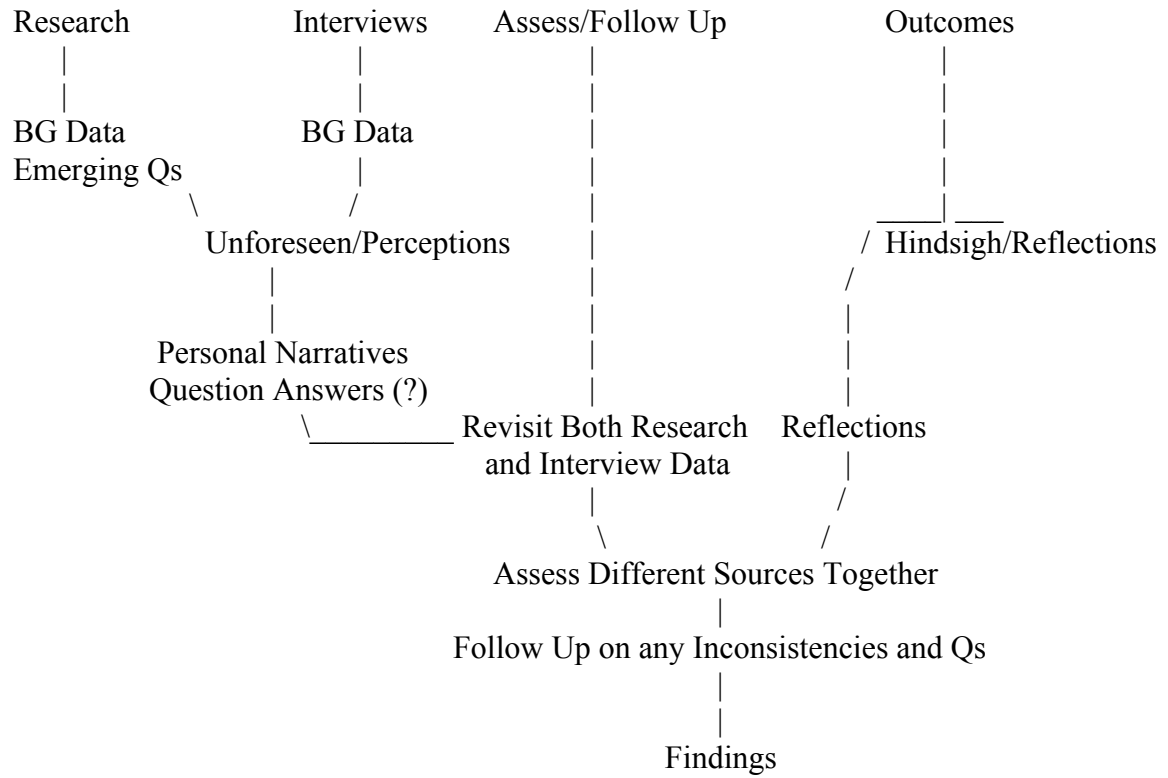
| What do I need to know?  | Why do I need to know this?  | What kind of data will answer the questions? | Where can I find the data?   | Time lines for acquisition. |
|--|--|--|--|-----------------------------|
| <b>1. What were the post-war changes implemented in Japanese secondary public and private education?</b>   | To better understand the history and formation of the education system in Japan              | - Secondary source documents<br>- Interviews | - Literature Reviewed Works<br>- Historical Documentation<br>- Interviews as available | TBD                         |
| <b>2. What is the structure of Japanese secondary public and private education?</b>  | To better understand the system in which the Japanese administrator operates                 | - Secondary source documents<br>- Interviews | - Literature Reviewed Works<br>- Historical Documentation<br>- Interviews as available | TBD                         |
| <b>3. What are the problems facing Japanese education?</b>   | To better understand the professional challenges facing the Japanese secondary administrator | - Secondary source documents<br>- Interviews | - Literature Reviewed Works<br>- Interviews as available                               | TBD                         |
| <b>4. How do Senshu University Matsudo Junior and Senior High School and its administrators represent the Japanese secondary private education system?</b> | To better assess how Senshu Matsudo is representative of the Japanese education system       | - Secondary source documents<br>- Interviews | - Literature Reviewed Works<br>- Interviews as available                               | TBD                         |

Format copied from Qualitative Research Design by Joseph A. Maxwell (2005)

## **Appendix D**

### **Research Timeline**

## Research Timeline



## **Appendix E**

### **Initial Letter of Interest**





Hello,

Please allow me to introduce myself. My name is Travis Brady. I am an educator at Senshu Matsudo's sister school in the United States, Lincoln Southwest High School. I greatly value the experiences from this sister school relationship, as well as the many friendships I have made with you and your colleagues.

In addition to teaching, I am also an aspiring administrator within my school district. I am highly interested in the field of administration, and in an effort to learn more about educational administration, your school, and Japanese secondary administration, I am conducting research seeking to examine the leadership role of the administrator in the Japanese secondary education system.

The focus of this study is not Japanese education specifically, but rather the role that administrators play within the education system and their specific school. As a current administrator or emerging leader within your school, your experiences are unique, and I am contacting you in the hopes that you will participate in this study so that I may better understand and share your experiences, and come to a better understanding of administrative leadership in Japanese secondary education.

Be assured that your identity will be kept strictly confidential, and you are free to decide not to participate in this study or to withdraw at any time without adversely affecting your relationship with the investigators, the University of Nebraska, or Senshu University Matsudo High School.

Thank you for your time and consideration. If you have any further questions, comments, or concerns please feel free to contact me.

Travis Brady, MST  
Lincoln Southwest High School  
Social Studies Educator  
Student Council Sponsor  
402.436.1306 ext. 66170  
tbrady@lps.org

## **Appendix F**

### **Consent Form**



## INFORMED CONSENT FORM

IRB#

Identification of Project:

Examining the Role of Administrative Leadership in Japanese Secondary Education.

### Purpose of the Research:

The purpose of this research is to examine the leadership role of the administrator in the Japanese secondary education system. The focus of this study is not Japanese education specifically, but rather the role that administrators play within the education system and their specific school. As a current administrator your experiences are unique, and I am contacting you in the hopes that you will participate in this study so that I may better understand and share your experiences, and come to a better understanding of administrative leadership in Japanese secondary education.

### Procedures:

Participation in this study will require one hour of your time in the form of an interview. The interview itself will be conducted around your schedule, and can be arranged in the meeting place of your choice. This interview will be audio taped with your permission.

### Risks and/or Discomforts:

While there are no known physical risks associated with this research, some psychological discomfort might be experienced depending on the information you choose to share in the interview about your experiences and/or school information. As the level of research sensitivity is minimal, no psychological consultation will be provided for the participant.

### Benefits:

While there will be no direct benefits for you from this study, your cooperation will greatly enhance understanding of the leadership role of the secondary administrator in Japan. The information and personal accounts that you provide will be compiled into a narrative format covering many dynamics of Japanese education and school leadership.

### Confidentiality:

Your identity will be kept strictly confidential. The data will be stored in a locked metal file cabinet in the investigator's home office and will only be seen by the investigator during the study and for three years after the study is complete. The information obtained in this study may be published in journals or presented at meetings.

**Opportunity to Ask Questions:**

You may ask any questions concerning this research and have those questions answered before agreeing to participate in or during the study. Or you may call the investigator at any time, office phone, (402) 436-1306, or after hours (402) 580-0257. If you have questions concerning your rights as a research subject that have not been answered by the investigator or to report any concerns about the study, you may contact the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Institutional Review Board, telephone (402) 472-6965.

**Freedom to Withdraw:**

You are free to decide not to participate in this study or to withdraw at any time without adversely affecting your relationship with the investigators, the University of Nebraska, or Senshu University Matsudo High School. Your decision will not result in any loss or benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

**Consent, Right to Receive a Copy:**

You are voluntarily making a decision whether or not to participate in this research study. Your signature certifies that you have decided to participate having read and understood the information presented. You will be given a copy of this consent form to keep.

\_\_\_\_\_ Check if you agree to be audio-taped during the interview.

Signature of Participant:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Research Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Name and Phone number of investigator(s)

Travis Brady, MST, Principal Investigator

Marilyn Grady, Ph.D., Secondary Investigator

Office: (402) 436-1306

Office (402) 472-0974

\_\_\_\_\_

## **Appendix G**

### **Interview Questions**

## **Interview Questions**

**Question 1. Why did you go into education?**

**Question 2. How long have you been in education?**

Probing Questions:

- a. How long were you a teacher?
- b. How long have you been an administrator?
- c. Assistant Principal?
- d. Principal?

**Question 3. Do you have plans for any other position(s) in the educational structure?**

**Question 4. How has Japanese education changed since you started teaching?**

Probing Questions

- a. What are the major policy changes?
- b. How has the culture of the schools changed?
- c. Has society changed, and if so, has it had an impact on education?

**Question 5. How has Japanese education changed since you became the principal?**

Probing Questions

- a. What are the major policy changes?
- b. How has the culture of the schools changed?
- c. Has society changed, and if so, has it had an impact on education?

**Question 6. How is the education system structured in Japan (top-down)?**

Probing Questions:

- a. What is the role of the Ministry of Education?
- b. What is the role of the prefecture?
- c. What is the role of the municipality?

**Question 7. In your opinion, what are some current problems facing the Japanese education system?**

Probing Questions:

- a. What has been done/attempted to correct these problems?
- b. Have the problems been adequately addressed?

**Question 8. In your opinion, what are some of the successes of the Japanese education system?**

**Question 9. Why did you become Principal/Assistant Principal?**

**Question 10. What is the process to becoming a principal?**

Probing Questions:

a. Is there a formal process to becoming a principal? Why/why not?

**Question 11. What were your perceptions about the principalship?**

Probing Questions:

a. What did you perceive the duties of Principal to be when you were a teacher?

b. How has your perception of duties changed since taking the principalship?

**Question 12. As a principal, what do you see as your main duties?**

**Question 13. What are the important personal attributes that you think are needed for the principalship?**

**Question 14. What does an effective Japanese school look like?**

**Question 15. What does an effective administrator look like?**

**Question 16. What role do you think the administrator plays in staff development?**

Probing Questions:

a. The role of the Principal?

b. The Role of the Assistant Principal?

**Question 17. What role do you think the principal plays in teacher evaluations?**

**Question 18. How would you describe Senshu Matsudo?**

Probing Questions:

a. How is Senshu Matsudo similar to other secondary schools in Japan?

b. How is Senshu Matsudo different to other secondary schools in Japan?

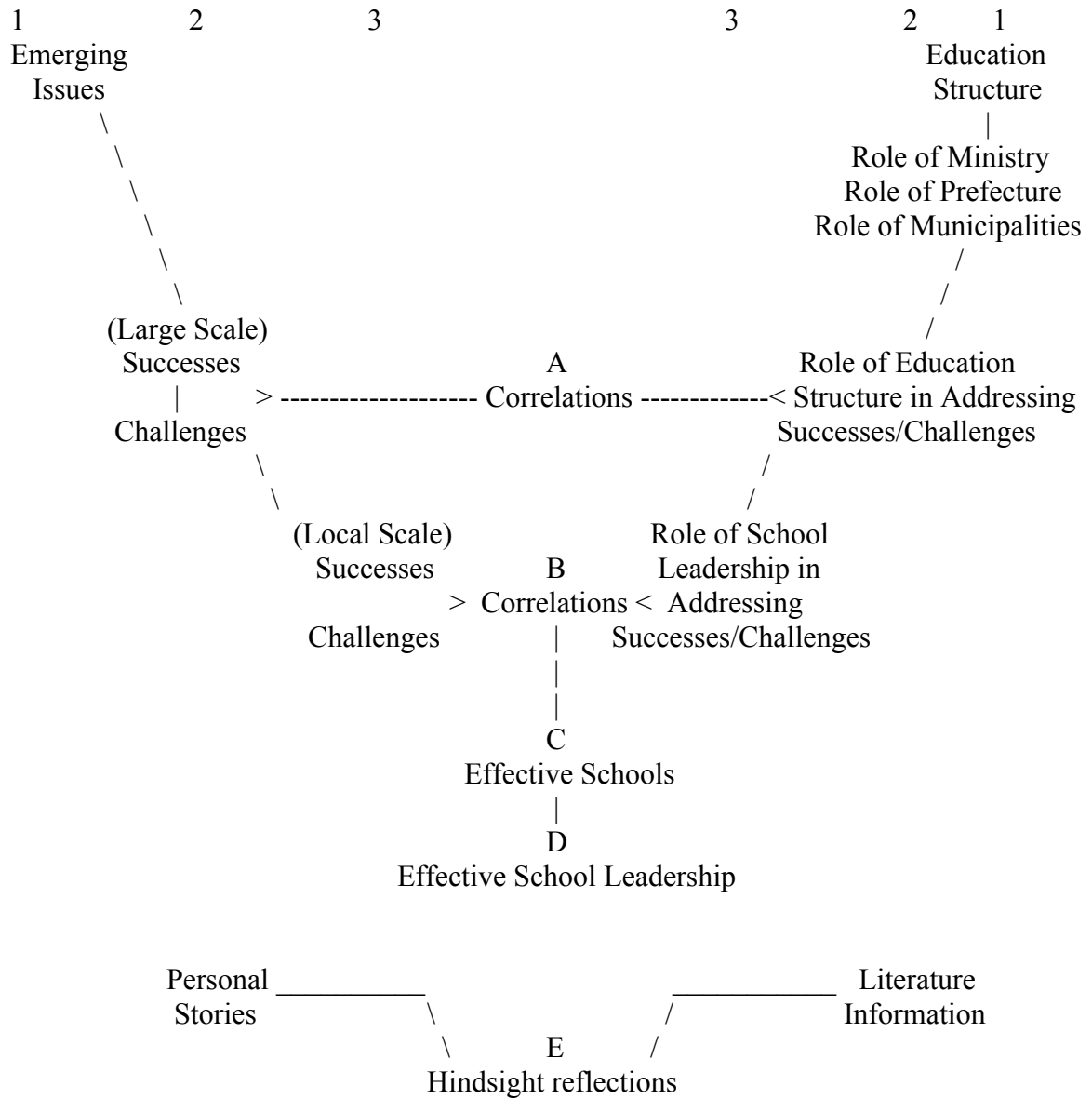
c. What is Senshu Matsudo known for (reputation)?

## **Appendix H**

### **Coding Scheme/Emergent Model**



### Coding Scheme/Emergent Model



## **Appendix I**

### **Confidentiality Agreement**

### **Transcriptionist Services**



**Confidentiality Agreement  
Transcription Services**

I, \_\_\_\_\_, transcriptionist, agree to maintain full confidentiality in regards to any and all audiotapes and documentation received from Travis Brady related to his doctoral study on The Role of Administrative Leadership in Japanese Secondary Education: A Portrait of School Leadership at Senshu University Matsudo Junior and Senior High School. Furthermore, I agree:

1. To hold in strictest confidence the identification of any individual that may be inadvertently revealed during the transcription of audio-taped interviews, or in any associated documents;
2. To not make copies of any audiotapes or computerized files of the transcribed interview texts, unless specifically requested to do so by Travis Brady;
3. To store all study-related audiotapes and materials in a safe, secure location as long as they are in my possession;
4. To return all audiotapes and study-related documents to Travis Brady in a complete and timely manner.
5. To delete all electronic files containing study-related documents from my computer hard drive and any backup devices.

I am aware that I can be held legally liable for any breach of this confidentiality agreement, and for any harm incurred by individuals if I disclose identifiable information contained in the audiotapes and/or files to which I will have access.

Transcriber's name (printed) \_\_\_\_\_

Transcriber's signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

## **Appendix J**

### **Interview Validation Form**



COLLEGE OF EDUCATION AND HUMAN SCIENCES  
Department of Educational Administration

### INTERVIEW VALIDATION FORM

**IRB# 20120612679 EX**

**Identification of Project:**

**Examining the Role of Administrative Leadership in Japanese Secondary Education.**

Dear Research Participant:

Please review the attached transcript of our recent interview regarding the role of administrative leadership in Japanese secondary education. Feel free to note all content errors that you find in order to make all the information as accurate as possible. Also, indicate your level of approval for your part in the project by placing an "X" on the appropriate statement below. Thank you.

\_\_\_\_\_ I approve of the interview transcript without reviewing it.

\_\_\_\_\_ I approve of the interview transcript without changes.

\_\_\_\_\_ I approve of the interview transcript with noted changes.

\_\_\_\_\_ I do not approve of the interview transcript.

Signature of Participant:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Research Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Please email this form back to Travis Brady at [tbrady@lps.org](mailto:tbrady@lps.org). Thank you.

Name and Phone number of investigator(s)

Travis Brady, MST, Principal Investigator

Marilyn Grady, Ph.D., Secondary Investigator

Office: (402) 436-1306

Office (402) 472-0974

141 Teachers College Hall / P.O. Box 880360 / Lincoln, NE 68588-0360 / (402) 472-3726 / FAX  
(402) 472-4300

## **Appendix K**

### **Senshu Permission Correspondence**

